DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 279 015 CS 210 304

AUTHOR	Burkett, Karolyn Holm, Ed.; Anderson, Dawn Holt, Ed.
TITLE	Taking Charge of Your Professional Life.
INSTITUTION	Ohio Univ., Chillicothe. Div. of Humanities.; Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE	86
NOTE	97p.; Parts may be marginally legible.
AVAILABLE FROM	FOCUS, Division of Humanities, Ohio University, Chillicothe, OH 45601 ($10.00 for one year subscription--3 issues).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	FOCUS: Teaching English Language Arts; v13 n1 Fall 1986
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Activism; Curriculum Development; Elementary Secondary Education; English Departments; English Instruction; *Faculty Development; *Professional Recognition; Research Utilization; Social Support Groups; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS	*English Teachers; *Professionalism

ABSTRACT

Intended for elementary and secondary school English teachers, this thematic journal issue offers practical suggestions and strategies to help educators improve their professional image, both in the classroom and in the larger sphere of the community. The titles and authors of the eight articles are as follows: (1) "Raising Your Consciousness: Life beyond the Classroom" by June Langford Berkley; (2) "Believing Your Own Experience: With No Apologies" by Gail Bossert Klink; (3) "Utilizing Research" by Karolyn Holm Burkett; (4) "Internalizing a Rationale" by Dawn Holt Anderson; (5) "Reaching Administration and Parents: Reaching Out" by Judith Keck; (6) "Working for Implementation" by Dawn Holt Anderson; (7) "Setting Up Support Groups" by Dawn Holt Anderson; and (8) "Disseminating Information and Affecting Policy" by Karolyn Holm Burkett. (NKA)

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Taking Charge Of Your Professional Life

FOCUS

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Published jointly by The Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English and the Ohio University Department of English Language and Literature

Volume XIII, Number 1
Fall 1986

Focus:
Teaching
English
Language
Arts
Ellis 385
Ohio University
Athens, Ohio 45701

CS 210304

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

FOCUS is published three times a year by the Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English (SOCTE), an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English and the Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts. Subscriptions are $10.00 for one year. Send check made payable to SOCTE to the editor's address below along with your name and address, including zip code.

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Although each issue of FOCUS is devoted to a specific theme, all articles and news items about the teaching of English and Language Arts, especially in Southeastern Ohio, are invited. Letters in response to articles published in FOCUS are particularly welcome. Articles should be typed and double-spaced. Avoid footnotes whenever possible by including documentation in the text. Otherwise, follow *The MLA Style Sheet* (Second Edition). Send one copy with stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

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Division of Humanities
Ohio University-Chillicothe
Chillicothe, Ohio 45601

Cover design: Janet Matasic

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FOCUS: TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

SPRING ISSUE: *WRITING ASSIGNMENTS*

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: MARCH 13, 1987

Assigning writing is the English teacher's most important task. Because composition research has not revealed what makes assignments effective, teachers usually rely upon classroom-tested assignments to elicit the kinds of writing they want students to produce. Composition research, however, has revealed a great deal about the processes of writing, and teachers are creating assignments that reflect what is known about the processes of writing. Such assignments are the theme of the Spring issue of FOCUS. Some ideas for articles are listed below.

- Writing to introduce literature
- Developing students' voices
- Sequencing assignments
- Developing students' awareness of audience
- Writing to free students' imaginations
- Guidelines for designing topics
- Assessment topics and instructional topics
- Composition research and writing topics
- Helping students develop their own topics
- Writing for self-discovery
- Writing for career planning
- Collaborative writing
- Prewriting
- Developing cognitive skills
- Freewriting
- In-class writing
- Exploratory writing
- Writing in the real world

Betty P. Pytlik, Guest Editor

* * *

FOCUS is published three times a year by the Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English (SOCTE), an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (OCTELA).

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FOCUS: TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

VOLUME XIII FALL 1986 NUMBER 1

TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR OWN PROFESSIONAL LIFE

GUEST EDITORS: KAROLYN HOLM BURKETT
DAWN HOLT ANDERSON

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INTRODUCTION

Taking control of your own professional life is not a quick or easy task for an elementary or secondary teacher. It involves a change in attitude, expectations, and goals. A new NCTE report on competency of teachers says that a submissive work force is doomed to mediocrity. It is time for teachers to begin to take control of their own professional lives. You must believe in your own expertise and experience. You must expect your associates to treat you as a professional, and you must be prepared to justify, defend, and promote your activites as a teacher.

Professionalism is the buzz work in the educational community today. Everyone from governors to newspaper editors to union presidents to legislators is calling for teaching to become a profession. I am probably prejudiced, but I believe that most English teachers have always considered themselves to be professionals. Why else do we have the sterotypical picture of the iron-willed, self-confident harridan that usually appears in cartoons and movies as 'The English Teacher'? She certainly has a sense of her own worth and belief in her own expertise! Our problem is that we are not viewed or treated as professionals by administrators, parents, members of the community, and in many instances, college professors. And part of the reason for this is our own willingness to accept these attitudes as a fact of life.

This journal grew out of a presentation that Dawn Andreson and I did for a spring program for the Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English in 1986. The presentation was designed to encourage teachers to become active in their professional groups, to become familiar with and begin to use current research in the teaching of English, to reach out to administrators and parents, to work for implementation of new programs, to set up support groups, and to disseminate information and try to affect policy in their own school districts, as well as at the state and local levels. One of the easiest ways to begin to work on these tasks in to read and use the journals, newsletters, and publications of NCTE and your local asciations. We have included a sampling of materials but it is only a sampling. You must put together your own set of materials for your own particular situation. Good Luck!

Karolyn Holm Burkett

RAISING YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS:

LIFE BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

by
June Langford Berkley

The single most important ingredient in an English Language Arts classroom is the informed spirit of the teacher whose professional life is centered there. The everyday demands of the classroom, however, can grow so large, loom in such proportions above the head of the teacher that the dimensions of the classroom itself may seem to be--for teacher and student alike--the ultimate reality of their existence. That is, the day-to-day life in the classroom and the demands on the energy, intellect and spirit of the teacher may come to be so all encompassing that the view beyond the classroom is obscurred. Students themselves may come to view the teacher as an installed service--an assigner of tasks, a grader of papers, an arbitrator of disputes. And a teacher under the yoke of the most oppressive class loads--the number one problem in American education--may come to view day-to-day survival as something near the center of the universe.

In such a world, the teacher becomes "Markham's Man with a Hoe," teaching to survive and to earn and earning to survive to teach--without ever looking up beyond horizon!

The too-prevalent popular view of teachers as oppressed (or, on the other extreme, over-paid) laborers--a work force called in by public need and watched over by an inherently wiser administrative staff--calls for a corps of 8 to 3 task masters who are expected to keep order, meet out assignments, and average grades. In fact, some within our profession view their teacher roles in this limited way; not infrequently articles appear in teachers' journals questioning whether or not we are indeed a profession.

Certainly many people who are in charge of classrooms are professionals by the sternest definition. But many are not.

Those are harsh words. But an examination of the current state of affairs, I fear, will bear them out. The response to the serious challenge of helping teachers take charge of their professional lives calls for a serious examination of the conditions which keep teachers in thrall to a long-evolving system of oppression. Infrequently, scholarly studies suggest several causes--and some tentative solutions. More often, those who could offer leadership and professional mentoring are not organized or disposed to do so.

First--and most unfortunately--some people enter the education profession viewing it primarily as an 8 to 4 job, one that requires a demanding but time-limited performance as the director, the overseer, of prescribed segments of learning--and then an early afternoon and finally a summer-long release from responsibility. Such people view teaching as the performance of prescribed classroom-centered tasks; they did not enter education to accept the challenge of the continual redefinition and design of what schools can and should do, the ongoing responsibility of discovering new ways to promote and evoke learning and human growth. The task of restructuring the views of these teachers, whose hourly-wage mentality impedes the serious revolution that must take place in our schools, falls to a second category of teachers: those who joined the profession because they viewed it as that--a challenging profession. These people were not looking for a wage. They were seeking ways to create meaning in their lives, and they understood from the beginning that the tasks of an educator lie far beyond the 8:00 to 3:30 confines of a classroom.

In between these two groups, it seems to many, there exists a large cadre of teachers who alternately threaten to group themselves with the former and then the latter. They are not sure of their tasks and responsibilities. They are buffeted by claims from the professional camp and taunted by "the workers" to accept what is presented a "reality." In this middle group are many teachers--who with some leadership, insight and example--might joint the ranks of true professionals.

Let us examine some possibilities for re-directing, re-vitalizing, and re-orienting this group. First, we must address the issue of time. Most teachers see workload as a more odious oppressor than the spectre of low pay. Their classroom duties alone seem to preclude their reading of professional journals, their enjoyment of self-initiated study, their continuation of their formal education, or their political involvement in the profession. Indeed their schedules often seem to preclude recreation itself and their protests indicate the futility of hope--there is, they say, no way they can involve themselves in any professional effort beyond that required by their contract: 1. Long-term experience with organized education-centered groups offers concrete evidence that professional involvement beyond the classroom is invigorating, enriching and productive. It is likely to empower and enrich pupil and teacher activity in the classroom. Attendance at even one inbigorating professional meeting may be enough to convince an isolated teacher that the mundane tasks of the classroom--for they will become mundane tasks if they are not informed by some life beyond the classroom--can be redefined or sometimes even eliminated and replaced by more productive efforts. 2. Such professional out-of-the-classroom experience must include a reorientation to the self-study and self-education that every good pedagogical background included. The educator must be self-starting, for there is no time--or money or energy--to go forth to enough meetings or classes that can encompass every perceived need of the classroom teacher. Teachers must be taught how to go on teaching themselves the art of teaching. 3. The kinds of teachers who have the energy and desire to do these two things must be cultivated--even lured--into classrooms. We must secure the high energy, high intellect individuals who will push the profession forward, not drag it down as ballast from the rear.

In the colleges of eduction we must help aspiring teachers understand that developing, monitoring and evaluating a classroom assignment is only part of the education profession. Those misinformed individuals who enter education seeking a short day and a long summer vacation must certainly be apprised--shown--that theirs is a mistaken notion, one that undermines all of American education. We must instead recruit individuals who have a realistic understanding of the reshaping of the American school system will required the best minds and the best energy of each generation. If such individuals that lack these qualities present themselves for teaching credentials, we must not be so weak kneed as to say we cannot perform subjective judgments. We can--in colleges of education--help students who are not motivated or suited to be active professionals select out of this career before the final stages of their certification. If would-be teachers do not possess the spiritual and physical energy to help shape the schools where they will teach, they should not be invited to enter. Certainly this will create a teacher shortage. It is not a happy alternative--but it is less dismal than the population of classrooms by individuals who need to be told daily or by a course of study what their tasks should be. The inherent crisis will bring up the strong and call forth new blood.

Recently I invited senior education majors in an advanced writing course to express their fears, dreams and concerns about their chosen career in a free, in-class writing. One especially articulate writer, Helen __________, gave this as her major concern: "I am afraid that I will become so involved in my work that my profession will occupy all of my hours, that my students' needs will take up all of my time and that I will no longer be able to read and keep up with research and important issues in education."

The student went on to discuss how the demands of planning lessons, securing materials, responding to individual needs, and grading and paperwork could consume a teacher's entire day--and even her night. In such a demanding profession, she feared that she would have no time to continue to read and consider the kinds of issues that had formed the core of our individual and shared research in that upper-level composition course.

When Helen read her paper aloud to the group, there was a general, thoughtful, rather doleful nod of agreement around the tables. These were thoughtful upperclassmem who had become more and more attuned to the realities of a teacher's classroom duties. Helen's delineation of the instructional challenges forcing teachers was overwhelming. In fact, they had become so aware of the day-to-day demands on a teacher's time that they had put aside for a moment their earlier recongnition of tasks and obligations equally important for our profession.

I asked the group if there was no one who found in the offered writing a certain curious contradiction to all we had studied and affirmed in recent weeks. The group was thoughtful, but no one saw any serious omission in Helen's declaration of what would constitute a devoted teacher's life. The probability that a dedicated teacher would have no time to apprise herself of emerging issues in education and ongoing academic and pedagogic research seemed quite realistic to the entire group.

I was aghast. I felt that their earlier profession of new-found wisdom and their sense of discovery and elation in the world of reading about education--in the excitement of sharing together what they had read and learned through reading--suddenly had taken flight. I had been fully convinced of--well, very hopeful about their genuine commitment to lives of reading and contemplation about their academic discipline and about education in general. Now this commitment had suddenly disappeared in a hurried fit of "reality." By their agreement with Helen's view of the hurried lives they would come to lead, they were affirming a fear I had sought to set aside overwhelmed by the daily demands of their classroom, they would likely divorc themselves from the larger world of theory and research and the writte camaraderie of other educators and spend these energies "teaching."

I waited for someone to acknowledge the horror of this loss--the fleetin era of our spoken commitment--not five weeks before when, in the height o their sense of discovery, they had vowed to continue their independent pursui of knowledge, a pursuit that would make them a part of the community o scholars in the world and keep them forever in that joyous state of learning. Now they counted out the tasks and the horror with Helen..

"Is there nothing missing in this view?" Is there nothing contradictory nothing at odds with our earlier vows?" I smiled ruefully. Suddenly one o the group spoke out: "It is her job--our job--to read and to be informed, just as much as it is to grade papers and make assignments and take fiel trips with students. It is our job.....if we are professionals."

Our job is not to teach only but to keep learning how to teach, the remembered. To keep discovering and defining and questioning--the whol educaation enterprise. The group was silent and thoughtful then nodded agai in new assent. "We will have to make time in our lives to read and reflect and study....somehow," another said. "We will need a group to remind us," Helen said, beginning to write again.

A group of unusual students who had shared the joy of individual discovery through reading, observation and intelligent discourse with colleagues affirmed again the difference between the teacher and the educator. "We will have to do it somehow," another continued. "It is our job to b informed, to continue to learn."

Easy to say, I thought, easy to forget. But easy to remember again when we talk together, I hope. It is the educator's obligation to be informed, to keep on learning, to choose and seek independent growth, to come together with colleagues and share and refine this growth and learning, to create a community of concern that entitles us to our profession.

On the other hand, we must take a serious look at those teachers already unhappily in our classrooms. We must try to determine whether or not there is something we can do to help teachers who do not view themselves as professionals to leave our company. I realize this is a serious and harsh suggestion. But American children will not be served by the continuation of such people in the roles of classroom teachers. Vigorous leadership from professional teachers should offer hard evidence--not only to community and school leaders but to teachers themselves--that there are those who conduct school and those who teach.

Intense efforts to organize in-service must be made. Such projects must include more than one-day shot-in-the-arm adventures for teachers. We all know the exhilaration of an exciting performer who reminded us in our yearly subject-matter convocational that ours is a noble and exhalted profession that calls for our highest, most spirited efforts. But by the following Wednesday many teachers have fallen back into the slough of despond. A support system for teachers' ongoing learning must be devised. This support system should include: informal and informed sharing of professional concerns; recognition of outstanding teaching and learning, from both within and without; public support, in terms of time and money; and professional leadership and informed insrtuction so that self-study and self-direction can be efficient and widespread. Particularly in the latter effort, it is important that teachers--who in all homesty do not have hours to spend searching through the archives of the local university library--be given informed pedagogical and subject matter leadership that includes specific suggestions about what to read, well organized and timely workshops on issues that will put theory into practice, and opportunities to self-initiate their own in-service projects.

The circular problem of the overloaded teacher who does not have time to look up from the academic hoe and so continues to labor away in the garden of deapair is not an easy problem to confront. Unless we can define our own problem we can never secure our own solutions. As long as we are given commissions of excellence reports that decry the "rising tide of mediocrity" and that yet do not mention even once in all those pages the basic problem of teacher load--as long as we accept these reports instead of submit our own--we will never take our rightful place as the real leaders in education.

But such assertion takes courage--and perhaps we should allow for experience and time. As a very young teacher I went during an in-service day to a seminar presented by a major utilities company. During the day we were informed by this utilities company of the four characteristics they most desired in employees, and we were admonished to produce such graduates. So dynamic was the presentation, so expensively and colorfully presented, that I returned hurriedly to my classroom--a seventh and eight grade split assignment that called for sixteen separate preparations--thoroughly convinced that I had spent a profitable day and had been appropriately apprised of my duties. I had no one with whom to discuss my thoughts, no time, I thought, to seek out another teacher to turn over in our minds the events and pronouncements of the day. I was young and so incompletelly educated that I was utterly--momentarily--taken in by the utility company's definition of what education ought to be. But somewhere in the middle of the night, in a vacant mood between my fitful wakings over how to present Ohio history and teach eighth grade mathematics, it occurred to me that this utilities company was probably in no position to tell me what American education ought to be.

I was the teacher--studying and striving to be an educator. I was the one who knew more about children and learning--and indeed about the whole of society. Yet I had been impressed by the overhead transparencies and the rhetoric. After all, everyone on the program made four times my salary, flew in on charter planes and dressed in Brooks Brothers suits. Surely their information and opinions were superior to mine. But it occurred to me that they were in the business of convincing and producing a commodity. I was in the business of teaching children something that went far beyond business. Although our economic security and the general welfare of the country are heavily dependent on the production of an efficient workforce, that goal alone should never be put forth as the dominant influence on or the reason for the American education system. That was my business, that was my concern, that was my field. And whether or not I was paid well to do it or flown about in a jet to pronounce on it, I knew in my heart of hearts that I understand what my children needed more than the utilities man in the Brooks Brothers suit. That morning when I looked at my class, the four key points of the General Electric official secure in my notebook, I squared my shoulders and looked my thirty-two students in the eye and felt that I would reconsider that evening the formulation of my own agenda. I knew it would be based not solely on economic need but influenced by the civilized requirements of human lives. I think that morning I became an educator.

I knew it was up to me to get the question straight before I accepted an answer. Since then, I have been invigorated rather than wearied by long hours of study and speculation and introspection and sharing and seeking--reading and re-reading, defining and re-defining--to arrive at this beginning of my recognition: as teacher I am neither governor nor governed. I am not a benevolent despot ruling for a few hours over a room sized kingdom. I am not a minstrel who comes to sing and entertain and pass on. I am not an overseer who does the bidding of the emperor in the main office. I am not the high priest who knows all, who by inspiration reads, edicts and hands down commandments and law. I am not the man--or the woman--with the hoe who labors that I might receive an end-of-the-month paycheck that enables me to teach on and receive the next month's pay. I am a free agent, engaged in a lifelong pursuit of a definition. I am a free spirit and an open mind. I live with the obligation to help my colleagues shape what is essentially unshapeable--that which must yet have form and meaning. I must by my own skills and self-directed learning, my own example, empower human lives. I have taken on the task of becoming an educator.

Vol. 1, No. 2
August 1976

SLATE

Support for Learning and Teaching of English

WHAT ARE THE "BASICS" IN ENGLISH?

The Issues

The current "back to the basics" slogan is symbolic of a nationwide concern and belief that the schools have failed in their major mission, which is to develop literate human beings. To laypersons and educators alike, literacy means the ability to read and write. Parents, legislators, and citizens' groups demand that the schools get back to the basics, especially in the teaching of English. They want teachers to return to practices that prove that reading, spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage still are respectable parts of the English curriculum. English/Language Arts teachers accept responsibility for teaching reading and writing. There is no immediate hostility toward the parent who asks: *Why can't my Johnny read better?* or *Why can't my eighth grader write a decent sentence?* or *Why aren't* they (you) *teaching the basics any more?* Part of the misunderstanding between English teachers and their critics stems from a need to define the "basics." Parents and legislators want students who score well on tests and schools that score above the norms on state and national assessments. For them, the surest evidence for teaching basic literacy skills comes when teachers isolate aspects of skills (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling) and drill them.

We English teachers recognize that aspects of skills are important parts of language learning, but we suspect that true literacy is not just the command of isolated skills. We know that language is a communication process, and that the whole of communication is much greater than the sum of its parts. We know that "good" scores on quantitative tests can be achieved in one of two ways: by teaching for the tests without worrying about the whole communication process, or by focusing on wholes by teaching the skills necessary for use. We know that test scores may not necessarily measure literacy, but we find that parents, school administrators, and other citizens lose patience when we try to develop literacy by putting skills into a functional perspective with less emphasis on isolated drill. Everyone agrees that basic skills should be taught. The conflict between teacher and parent concerns not only *how* the teaching of basic skills should be accomplished, but also *what* those basic skills are or should be. The crucial issue which must be made clear if true literacy is to be developed is: What are the "basics" in English?

Professional Viewpoints: NCTE/Research

In 1952, The NCTE Commission on English published *The English Language Arts* (New York: Appleton-Century Crof 1952). In it, they identified the basic interrelated skills reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Other succeedi NCTE publications identified the total language proce involved with and revolving around the skills required English proficiency. The movement has been decidedly aw from the teaching of skills in isolation and the traditic emphasis upon grammar exercises, sentence parsing, and ot drillwork. Instead, NCTE advocates the importance of l guage arts skills being used to reinforce each other. In t process of reinforcement, students explore a wide range reading interests, get involved in a variety of related lean activities, and thereby develop a firmer grasp of all of necessary language competencies.

Available research in the teaching of language, compositi and literature suggests that *isolated* teaching of skills cannot justified. The findings suggest that, like synergy, the wh (language acquisition and development) is greater than the s of its parts (unrelated drill teaching of grammar and spell mechanics). Several studies underscore the interrelated nat of language. Frogner (1933), McCarthy (1954), and Dieder (1957) suggest that maturity and stage of intellectual devel ment [not grammar and sentence parsing] are closely rela to composition skill.[1] Composition and reading are assumec be closely related, this assumption based upon the obvi interrelationships between the writer's message, the cho medium, and the reader's skill in interpreting the messa Good measures of reading ability have turned out to be most trustworthy indices of writing ability.

Searles and Carlson suggest the uselessness of teachi grammar and usage in isolation from composition.[2] Co critized the isolated teaching of grammar, syntax, and pu tuation and stressed the fact that if language is to be viewed an instrument of communication, grammar should be tau not as a set of rules but as a factor in comprehendi meaning.[3] Similar viewpoints have been expressed by Mcl and Ebbit.[4] NCTE strongly criticized the methods wh involved devoting separate time periods to separate sk without relating those skills. A 1958 study by Meckel, Squi and Leonard stressed the importance of reading as a source ideas, and writing as a means of clarifying, organizing, applying ideas from reading and discussion.

The result of these highly influential studies in English been a definition of "basics" that treats the discipline as interrelated whole, and not only avoids, but also disavows t kind of "basic" content now being defined by tests and call for loudly in the "Back to Basics" issue.

What we have learned from examining the viewpoints a research of authorities in the profession is that langu development is a *process* deserving of a broad approa Emphasis in teaching should be placed upon the the ability use skill elements (grammar, usage, vocabulary, spelling, etc.) in relevant language processes, and to keep those elements in perspective as supportive to the larger processes.

In summary, research and practical experience have revealed a number of "knowns" about English teaching: We know

- that there is little transfer value in isolated oral drill on usage for promoting changes in speech.
- that varieties of oral language exist, and that different forms are acceptable and useful in different contexts.
- that it has not worked to teach formal grammar in isolation as a means of improving writing.
- that the content of many language tests provides reasons for deep reservations: Can a child's writing skill be measured on a test that requires no writing?
- that drill on phonics has not proved a sure path to reading.
- that most students learn to write and read by performing real tasks: writing stories, notices, letters, and reports for classroom "audiences", reading factual articles, advertisements, stories, and other real messages.
- that spelling and vocabulary are best learned in context; that sentence building is more productive than either sentence analysis or labeling.
- that drills on parts may be useful for students when diagnosis shows weaknesses in specific areas, but that drill on parts is not a good substitute for whole reading and writing tasks.
- that for some capable students, school loses credib
  when work is mainly busywork drill; many "aver
  students need help *during* the process of reading
  writing far more than they need isolated drill on p
  and some less able students are turned off from re
  and writing (and sometimes from school) when exer
  on parts of reading and writing don't lead to sk
  readers and writers.

Strategies for Action

What society wants is clear: literacy. Reading and w
its basic components, traditionally and appropriately ar
concern of the English/language arts teacher. It is ho
achieve literacy (and what *kind* of literacy is needed)
separates teachers from parents. The first step is to dilut
hostility that grows between "us and them" by acknowle
the literacy message. We must hear it and know that it is
but we must not offer quick answers on how to accompli
We are obligated not to mislead parents into thinking
drills on parts or the learning of grammar or phonics (th
quick and easy to do) will lead to better reading or writing
cannot fall back on the dishonest practice of "teaching t
test."

Since we recognize the limitations of teaching iso
skills, our second need is to define what really is "basi
English teaching. Authorities suggest that the real basic
language processes. A way to focus in on language proces
to use what we have learned about language acquisition
development to derive a set that can be applied to all hu
language activities. Three basic levels of language processe
be identified in ascending order: 1) imitative processes rel
to basic literacy at the recognition and recall levels
organizing processes related to fluency in the use of t
language tools, and 3) critical, creative, and evalu
processes involving originality and conscious choice of
guage alternatives. These processes require the use of parts,
in a context rather than in isolation. A grid like the follo
could help to explain the relationships to parents:

Levels of Processes	LANGUAGE SKILLS		
	Reading	Oral Language	Writing
Imitative	Recognition and recall of ideas	Basic auditory perception, discriminatory reproduction (in any dialect)	Basic literacy in manipulating symbols
Organizing	Organizing and interpreting ideas	Ease and fluency of oral communication	Organizing and producing messages in sentences, paragraphs, etc.
Critical/ Creative Evaluation	Reading critically and selectively	Conscious choice of language alternatives	Conscious choice of patterns to suit purpose (originality, style)

Parents and others can be helped to understand that the "basics" being called for really represent only the lowest levels of skills–the isolated parts. By focusing on wholes at the organizing and critical levels, we help students better to understand why the imitative skills are necessary and how these skills fit into the whole picture.

A third step is to seek serious talk with parents about societal problems affecting literacy. Do parents sense, as we do, the decline in reading in the home? Have they noticed, with us, the conspicuous decline in writing? Are parents concerned, as we are, with the scarcity of role models for young readers and writers? (The facts are: Fewer than 2% of adult Americans buy over 90% of all hardcover books; television is a frequent substitute for reading, and the telephone is a frequent substitute for writing.) Are parents communicating to their children negative values regarding the skills they are asking the schools to teach?

As part of the societal discussions, we need to work toward developing enlightened attitudes about what constitutes "correct" speech. Awareness of the concept of appropriateness is best developed by an examination of one's own range of language usage, from highly formal to informal. Your colleagues in the profession can join forces with you in efforts to gain recognition of the existence of varied dialect forms for *all* speakers. Efforts can be made to challenge the assumption (by employers, for example) that the existence of a "different" speech dialect automatically implies defects in the ability to read, to write effectively, or to think logically.

A fourth and most crucial step is to engage in *economic* discussions with parents and the community. Concede, for example, that not enough attention is given to the teaching of writing; and note that not enough well-trained teachers and other professionals are available to give students individual help and encouragement. Inservice training to develop teachers' skills requires the allocation of sufficient resources. Adequate allocations of funds are necessary to provide classroom environments conducive to learning basic skills: classroom libraries full of books, magazines, and other materials appealing to a variety of tastes; and comfortable places to look, skim, and read. Some special programs may be necessary where students, for whatever reasons, have been found to be operating at a deficit for long periods of time. Perhaps the time and money invested by state legislatures, school systems, and boards of education in mandating testing programs (a hazardous and unknown quantity) could be better invested in providing adequate resources for supporting the many known quantities upon which educational programs could and should be operating.

Finally, our dialogues with parents, school boards, legislators, and other citizens should include honest self-criticism of areas where we have not done as well as we should, enlightened discussion of the problems they can and must help solve, and mutual recognition of the need for societal support (in attitudes as well as resources) so that English/language arts teachers can, appropriately enough, deal with the basics of reading and writing.

Stephen Dunning
Virginia Redd
(For the SLATE STEERING COMMITTEE)

Resources

"An Articulated English Program: A Hypothesis to Test." *Modern Language Association of America* 74 (1959): 13-19.

Artley, A.S.; Hildreth, Gertrude; Townsend, A.; Berry, A.; and Dawson, M. *Interrelations Among the Language Arts.* Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1954.

Boraas, J. "Formal English Grammar and the Practical Mastery of English." Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Minnesota, 1917. Cited in *Handbook of Research on Teaching* edited by N.L. Gage. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963.

Botel, M. "We Need a Total Approach to Reading." *Reading Teacher* 13 (1960): 254-257.

Braddock, Richard; Lloyd-Jones, Richard; and Schoer, Lowell. *Research in Written Composition.* Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1963.

Carlesen, G. Robert. "Some Random Observations–About the English Curriculum." *English Journal* 61 (October 1972): 1004-1009.

Davis, A.L., ed. *Culture, Class, and Language Variety.* Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1972. (Accompanied by a cassette tape recording of dialect speakers).

Fishman, Joshua. *Language in Socio-Cultural Change.* Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972.

Maloney, Henry B., ed. *Accountability and the Teaching of English.* Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1972.

Zuck, Louis V. and Yetta Goodman. "On Dialects and Reading." *Journal of Reading* 15 (April 1972): 500-503.

The SLATE STEERING COMMITTEE offers the Starter Sheets as resources for dealing with current issues affecting the teaching of English. Reproduce these sheets and use them in any ways that might help to promote better understanding of the goals of English teaching.

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1 **E. Frogner, "Problems of Sentence Structure in Pupils' Themes," in *English Journal* 22 (1933): 742-749; D. McCarthy, "Language Development in Children," in L. Carmichael, ed., *Manual of Child Psychology* (New York: Wiley, 1954), 492-630; and P. Diederich, "The Problem of Grading Essays." (Princeton, N.J.: Educational Testing Service, 1957), mimeographed.**

2 J. Searles and G. Carlsen, "English Language, Grammar, and Composition." In C.W. Harris, ed., *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, 3rd ed. (New York: MacMillian Company, 1960), 454-470.

3 L. Cook, "Language Factors Involved in Interpretation," *Reading Teacher* 12 (1959): 152-157.

4 P. McKee, *The Teaching of Reading in the Elementary School* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1948); and W. Ebbit, "Problems Caused by the Grammatical, Logical, and Rhetorical Structure of What is Read," cited in N.L. Gage, ed., *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (Chicago: Rank McNally, 1963), p. 896.

ON CONDEMNING THE USE OF WRITING AS PUNISHMENT

This resolution stems from a concern that the use of writing assignments as punishme remains widespread, despite its ill effects on student attitudes toward and learning o this important life skill. Proposers of the resolution cited a national survey of teach showing that 54 percent of respondents were aware of "the practice of assigning writ to punish students or to extinguish unacceptable behavior."

The aims of sound writing instruction are defeated when teachers and administrators elementary and secondary schools—and even officers in the judicial system—assign copywork or themes as punishment, the proposers said. They added that both researc and English teachers' experience confirm that students who have experienced punitiv writing assignments form negative attitudes toward writing.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English condemn punitive writ assignments;

that NCTE discourage teachers, administrators, and others from making a punishment of such writing as copywork, sentence repetition, original paragraphs and themes, and other assignments which inhibit desired attitudes and essential communication skills; and

that NCTE disseminate this opinion to the appropriate audiences, including the general public.

NCTE Actions: Resolution and letter to leaders of pertinent organizations, including National School Boards Association, National Association of Secondary School Princip National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Education Association American Federation of Teachers, and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; request for NEA and AFT to give attention to the issue in their periodicals.

Suggested Member Action: Circulate the resolution, perhaps with letter from affiliat leaders, among principals, parent-teacher organizations, state and local administrator organizations, and state and local NEA and/or AFT; propose district-level policies discouraging writing as punishment; raise the issue at faculty meetings, pointing to th NCTE resolution and research on the effects of writing apprehension on student performance.

ON OPPOSING ABRIDGMENT OR ADAPTATION AS A FORM OF CENSORSHIP

This resolution reflects concern among teachers of English about the publishing practice by which important works of literature are abridged and sometimes altered for use in textbooks without adequate explanation by the publisher. In some instances, abridgment and adaptation may constitute censorship. Moreover, teachers can make informed choices in the textbook selected only when full information is provided about changes in texts.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English recommend that publishers present the complete text or sections of work which they choose to print, whether in a single text or in an anthology; and

that NCTE urge that if publishers do abridge or adapt a text, they clearly state in the textbook that these alterations have occurred, and explain the nature and extent of the abridgment or adaptation in promotional information, teachers' guides, and other support materials.

NCTE Actions: Resolution and letter to numerous educational publishers, requesting a response to the concerns expressed in the resolution; resolution and letter to American Association of Publishers and to chief state school officers.

Suggested Member Actions: Propose district and state-level policies requiring that the issues related to abridgment and adaptation be considered in the evaluation and purchase of textbooks; make the resolution available to individuals and committees that deal with textbook evaluation and selection; write to publishers who fail to explain the nature and extent of abridgments and adaptations, requesting such information and inquiring why it was not included.

Volume 5 Number 4 April 1980

SLATE Support for the Learning and Teaching of English

LITERATURE AS A BASIC

The Issue

Many people think of literature as providing only a pleasant interlude of escape from the real business of life. They see little reason for spending much school time on it, at least not after the elementary years. Yet some of these same people are very concerned about the stories their children read. They believe that the fictions their children are given in school may influence their thinking, perhaps even their behavior, and lead to activities that are immoral or violent. The bitter controversies that erupt every year in various communities over the teaching of some story or other demonstrate how commonly recognized is this power of literature to influence character. These parents are right, certainly, to be concerned about what their children read, for literature is indeed powerful—it can have great practical, personal, and social effect.

The Practical Value

Those youngsters with large vocabularies and the ability to use language effectively are almost always those who read a great deal—and they have been reading stories. They will keep on reading a story even when the words are hard and the sentences are difficult—they want to know what's going to happen next. A youngster engrossed in a story comes to a strange word, and later on meets that word again in a different context and begins to understand what it means. In this same way new language patterns are learned and a "feel" for written language is developed. One reason a teacher selects a particular story to read with youngsters is often this opportunity it gives them to learn new words and new language patterns as they read and talk about it.

Also, literature gives young people experience with language used in the most efficient way. A poem is efficient, it says much in a few words. The same is true of short stories, plays, and novels—they can give us a person, a family, a home and history, and a whole philosophy of life, all in relatively few words. Youngsters reading them, and writing stories or poems of their own, are developing an ability to use language that is concise, exact, and flowing.

In fact, they are developing skills necessary for all kinds of writing. Anyone who writes a report of a laboratory experiment, an account of the new sales program, or an essay on crime prevention, is really telling a story and must be very sure of three things: 1) the characters—the forces or factors involved; 2) the setting—the place or situation; and 3) the plot—the actions taken to deal with, understand, or overcome the situation. All writing has its roots in narrative.

The Personal Value

We each have only one life to live, but through poems and stories we participate in many lives. We meet people of all kinds making their way however they can, and everything that happens to them tests their character. They live through hardship and good fortune, they are tempted, they are weak and they are strong. Reading about them, we feel as though we are living with them, making the same choices and facing the consequences. We experience the story as we experience real life—and afterwards we want to know what it means.

But a poem or story does not tell us its meaning, we have to work that out for ourselves. Other kinds of writing give us the facts and tell us what they mean, but a story unfolds as life unfolds and we must decide for ourselves what lesson it teaches. It requires readers to do their own thinking and to be responsible for making meaning. In this sense, poems and stories demand more of us than expository prose, and are often harder to read.

We look at those people in the story and consider how they have lived. Did they do the right things, did they make the right choices? Youngsters answering such questions must speak of their own beliefs and values, their own ideas of right and wrong. In this way literature involves them in the life of moral choice. A teacher who helps young people learn how to think about a story or poem is helping them develop a thoughtful, reflective approach to their own experience.

All of us prepare ourselves in imagination for what life will bring. This accounts for the fascination of many stories—they tell about what might come, and how others have met the test and triumphed or failed. Youngsters look forward fearfully, doubtfully, hopefully to what may happen in their lives, and stories help them manage these fears and inner conflicts as they prepare for future development. A story draws on emotions.

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elping us to feel and think through a life situation in a isciplined way. Often youngsters who will accept no other iscipline at first, will accept that which begins with reading, elling, and writing stories.

he Social Value

The life and character of our nation, its ideals and dreams, re revealed by its literature in a way that commits us once gain to its hope and promise. In poems and stories we have the volution of the American experience—through immigration, lavery, frontier, farm, and city—told not by statistics and facts ut by living people. To know and understand the great iversity of this country, and its essential unity, we need to xperience its literature. To know any nation, we need to hear he poems and stories its people tell.

Chance pulls into my classroom a miscellaneous collection of oung people, and we read a story together. As we talk about he experience, sharing our thoughts and feelings, we begin to now each other and find our common purpose—we are ecoming a community. And this small community within the chool reflects ideals shared with the large community outside t. Parents are right to expect that the school will foster the deals by which they would have their children live. And when ll of us—parents, students, and teachers—talk together about he poems and stories young people are reading, then literature s helping us come together and develop our trust. Controversies ver reading materials have split some communities, but in fact here is no better way for us to find our common purpose than o talk about what the young are reading and writing.

For Further Reading

Literature as a basic is discussed more completely in the following books, some of which also give many interesting examples of classroom activity. The first five are books for the general audience, as well as for teachers; the last two are of particular interest to teachers.

The Educated Imagination, by Northrop Frye. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1964.

The Completed Gesture: Myth, Character, and Education, by John Rouse. Skyline Books, Ringwood, N.J. Also available from NCTE.

Being with Children, by Philip Lopate. Doubleday & Company, N.Y., 1975.

The Secret Places, by David Holbrook. University of Alabama Press, 1965.

My Sister Looks Like a Pear: Awakening Poetry in Young People, by Douglas Anderson. Hart Publishing Company, N.Y., 1974.

The New Hooked on Books, by Daniel Fader. Berkley Publishing Company, N.Y., 1976.

Growth Through English, by John Dixon. Cox & Whyman Ltd, London, 1967.

John Rouse
(For the NCTE/SLATE Steering Committee
on Social and Political Concerns

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Starter Sheet

February 1983

SLATE Support for the Learning and Teaching of English

COMBATTING CENSORSHIP OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The Issues

Censorship of instructional materials is pervasive nationally and increasing sharply. A recent study sponsored by the Association of American Publishers, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the American Library Association revealed that more than 20 percent of the nation's school districts and 30 percent of our school libraries have been involved in challenges of materials and that these challenges have influenced the selection of instructional materials. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, ten professional associations, including the National Council of Teachers of English, have formed a coalition, the Academic Freedom Group, to develop "a detailed and specific action program."

All members of the coalition clearly recognize that censorship challenges have not been isolated skirmishes. Evidence suggests that they are most often a significant part of the political and economic battle plan of well-organized, nationally powerful affiliations such as the conservative "New Right" activists and fundamentalist religious groups.

Issues are complex, but they include concerns such as:

- What role do students, parents, and educators play in the development of educational programs and in the selection and use of instructional materials?
- Do students have a right to learn about a subject, "a right to know"?
- What academic and professional rights do teachers have regarding materials selection and teaching techniques for classroom group use? For individual student use?
- Do parents have a right to forbid that their children be exposed to specific cultural, moral, religious, ethnic, scientific, or political views and materials?
- For what in education may public tax money be legitimately used?
- What rights are guaranteed by the First Amendment that impact upon learning and teaching in the public schools?

Professional Viewpoints: NCTE

The National Council of Teachers of English and its state affiliates have as one of their major concerns matters related to censorship and the teaching of the English language arts. The Council is, for example, a member of the National Coalition Against Censorship; it encourages efforts of its standing committee, the Committee Against Censorship; it publishes many useful works, such as those listed in the bibliography, that are designed to aid members to cope successfully with censorship problems; and it has passed resolutions opposing censorship at its 1967, 1974, and 1981 meetings. The 1981 resolution reads in part: "RESOLVED, that in the face of increasing censorship the members of the National Council of Teachers of English reaffirm the student's right of access to a wide range of books and other learning materials under the guidance of qualified teachers and librarians; and that all English teachers be urged to resist censorship by employing points of view and approaches recommended in *The Students' Right to Read* and other NCTE publications on censorship."

Strategies for Action

1. Develop and promote, on a regular basis, good public relations and communication with community groups and parents about the school's philosophy and goals, the English-language arts educational objectives, the curricula and classroom and library-media programs.
2. Distribute this material and the NCTE booklet, *The Students' Right to Read*, to all faculty, school board members, administrators, community and parent groups.
3. Prepare, and have formally adopted by the school board, a written selection policy for all media, print and audiovisual. Include a well-defined procedure for handling challenged materials. Coverage should include:
    - a. Philosophy and goals of the school system
    - b. Goals and objectives of the instructional program
    - c. Responsibility for selection of instructional materials
    - d. Criteria for selection of instructional materials
    - e. Standard, professional and current selection tools to be consulted (e.g., *Elementary School Library Collection*, W.H. Wilson Company Catalog Series, *Book Finder*, and NCTE booklists)

(cont.)

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f. Procedures for reconsideration of instructional materials
  (1) Statement of policy
  (2) Guiding principles
  (3) Specific procedures
    (a) Informal resolution
    (b) Formal resolution
  (4) Forms would include:
    (a) Instructional objectives rationale form
    (b) Reconsideration of instructional materials form
    (c) Reconsideration of non-fiction instructional materials form
    (d) Reconsideration of fiction instructional materials form
  (5) Appendix would include documents such as:
    The Students' Right to Read. National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL, 1982.
    School Library Bill of Rights for School Library Media Programs. American Association of School Libraries of American Library Association, 1980.
    American Library Council. *Sexism, Racism, and Other Isms in Library Materials.* American Library Association, 1973.
    Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Executive Council. *Statement on Censorship.* ASCD, 1982.
    National Coalition Against Censorship. "Statement of Concern." NCAC, 1982.

4. Follow the procedure for handling challenged materials without deviation.
   a. Attempt to resolve the challenge informally, but if at the end of the meeting, the complainant still wishes to challenge the material, a form for reconsideration should be provided.
   b. Only when the written request for reconsideration has been filed should the formal review process commence as outlined in the selection policy.
   c. Adhere to the policy established for reconsideration of instructional materials. There should be no restrictions or curtailment of use of the questioned material while it is being reconsidered.
   d. Follow the time line established in the policy. Complete the process with the written report.
   e. Consult your NCTE state president, local English supervisor, and English language arts state department consultant for further assistance and advice.
5. Acquaint the faculty, administrators, and parents with all aspects of the selection policy and the challenged materials procedure through in-service programs and workshops yearly so there is no question of what is involved or what is to be done.
6. Keep on file a written faculty rationale, an explanation of the controlling principle, for any materials students read or study in common or that are most-often censored.
7. Permit students to have an alternate assignment or allow students choices when developing course assignments and objectives.
8. Provide a variety of books and materials addressed to different levels of readability, maturation, and interest.
9. Honor a parent's right to exempt his or her child from content or assignments to which he or she objects.
10. Use standard and current professional bibliographies when selecting materials to support the instructional program.
11. Include a clause in the bargaining contract protecting academic freedom. Work for Board adoption of grievance procedures to protect teachers' due process rights.
12. Consult current references on censorship available from NCTE, ALA, and other professional organizations such as those cited in the bibliography below.

Censorship in your school system may well be prevented if you follow the foregoing guidelines and those in the NCTE *Students' Right to Read.*

Geneva T. Van Horne
(For the SLATE Steering Committee)

Resources

American Library Association. Office of Intellectual Freedom. 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

National Coalition Against Censorship. 132 West 43rd Street, New York, New York 10036.

National Council of Teachers of English. 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Publications

Association of American Publishers, American Library Association, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. *Limiting What Students Read: Books and Other Learning Materials in Our Public Schools: How They Are Selected and How They Are Removed.* New York, New York: AAP, 1981.

Burress, Lee, and Edward Jenkinson. *The Students' Right to Know.* Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1982.

Davis, James E., ed. *Dealing With Censorship.* Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1982.

Jenkinson, Edward B. *Censors in the Classroom: The Mind Benders.* Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979.

Minnesota Coalition Against Censorship. *Essential Elements of Instructional Resource Selection Policies and Reconsideration Procedures.* Minneapolis, Minnesota: MCAC, 1980.

National Council of Teachers of English. "Statement of Censorship and Professional Guidelines." Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1982.

National Education Association, Teacher Rights Division. *Helping Teachers Teach All the Children: Workshop Resource Book.* Washington, D.C.: NEA, 1981.

O'Neil, Robert M. *Classrooms in the Crossfire: The Rights and Interests of Students, Parents, Teachers, Administrators, Librarians and the Community.* Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1981.

The Students' Right to Read. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1982.

Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Guidelines for the Development of Instructional Materials Selection Policies.* Olympia, Washington: Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1981.

Entire issues devoted to the topic in selected journals: *Indiana English.* Fall, 1977; *Missouri English Bulletin 38.* May, 1980; *New Jersey Libraries.* Summer, 1982; *Ohio Media Spectrum.* Summer, 1982; *Social Education.* April, 1982; *Wisconsin English Journal.* April, 1980; *Wisconsin Library Bulletin.* Spring, 1981.

Volume 5 Number 11 December 1980

SLATE Support for the Learning and Teaching of English

Guidelines for Political Action

Good English teaching may have trouble surviving in this country unless English teachers become politically involved. We are all citizens, and we share with all other citizens the right to have our views heard and our influence felt. "Lobbying" is not a dirty word. It doesn't mean bribery or payoffs—something very few English teachers could afford anyway. Honest lobbying means stating a position clearly, disseminating accurate information, and working in the open to influence the laws and regulations that control what happens to our students.

With the right approach, we can have an effect on what happens, not as much as we'd like, perhaps, but some. If we don't try, we will certainly have no effect at all. English teachers, who are responsible for teaching the country's children to read with understanding, speak with clarity and conviction, and write with accuracy and logic, have a special responsibility to use those skills in the service of better education. Labels such as "special interest group" need not frighten us. "Special interest" here means specialized knowledge about the methods and conditions under which students learn to read and write, and specialized information about the ways in which literacy can be defined, enlarged, and measured.

Every NCTE affiliate should have a legislative committee. Individuals working alone can do a great deal, and their help should be sought, but without one specific group responsible for keeping track of proposed legislation, alerting the membership when action is needed, and organizing the effort, attempts to influence what happens are likely to be sporadic, ineffective, and occasionally contradictory. If your affiliate does not already have a legislative committee, urge it to form one.

It doesn't matter that a new legislative committee contains no experienced lobbyists. Lobbying is a technique that can be learned. Neither does it matter that successes may seem slight and far apart. Changing attitudes and convincing lawmakers is slow work; education, at any level, is a gradual process.

Although political action can occur locally or nationally, affiliates can usually be most effective working with their state legislatures and their state boards of education. This booklet concentrates on such action, but the same advice and the same general guidelines apply to problems in local school districts as well as to matters of national concern.

The Legislative Committee

A good legislative committee should be small: four to ten people genuinely interested in political processes, knowledgeable (or willing to learn) about how laws are passed, and dedicated enough to give the energy and time needed to get something done. Membership on a legislative committee is a working job, not an honorary appointment.

The legislative committee should have a budget as large as the affiliate can afford. Money will be needed for postage, phone calls, mailgrams, subscriptions, and travel.

Ideally, the committee should have at least one member who lives in the state capital or near enough to be easily available.

What the Legislative Committee Can Do

1. *Get acquainted with key legislators, those most influential in education decisions.* Be sure to include the representatives from the members' own districts, whether or not they are on educational committees. Visit them in their legislative offices or call on them when they are at home between sessions. Legislators welcome a chance to know their constituents, especially if the purpose of the first visit is merely to establish friendly relations rather than to ask a favor.
2. *Get to know the legislative aides.* The aides can be as important as the legislators themselves. The legislative staff is more available, responsible for much of the background work that precedes a vote, and frequently influential in what the vote is. If you are on good terms with staff members, they can provide information about developments and arrange for the legislators to hear you or your suggestions.
3. *Offer to provide research or surveys on specific topics.* Legislators, who must deal with a wide variety of state concerns, are often grateful for definite, reliable information in areas in which they are not expert.

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4. *Make sure that key legislators are aware of your affiliate and what it tries to do for English teaching.* One way is to invite legislators as convention speakers. Usually they won't need an honorarium, but they will need to be met and returned to the airport, provided with a hotel room for an overnight stay, and have their meals taken care of. (A caution: legislators sometimes don't–or can't–keep their commitments, and last-minute cancellations have occurred. When you plan on politicians as speakers, make back-up plans in case of emergency.)

5. *Monitor pending legislation that will affect English teaching.* Such monitoring is not an easy job. In some states as many as a hundred educational bills can be in the legislative hopper during a single year. There are, however, some ways to keep track of what is going on:

Important or controversial bills are often reported in local papers.

School administrators sometimes have current information which they are willing to share, especially if they believe their interests coincide with yours–and they frequently do.

The weekly legislative summary, issued when the legislature is in session, is a reliable source, and a subscription is worth the expense.

Professional lobbyists for other educational organizations (NEA or AFT, for example) can provide information, especially if their goodwill has been cultivated.

Membership in other politically conscious groups, such as the League of Women Voters or ACLU, can help. Their bulletins will sometimes alert you to items you may have missed.

Legislative staff members with whom you are friendly may warn you of new developments, either by a collect phone call or in answer to your queries.

6. *Decide first on areas where you are likely to be most influential and concentrate on those issues.* There's no way a handful of people, whose time and energy are limited by other obligations, can deal with everything at once. On the other hand, don't confine yourself to the same narrow issue and gain a reputation for caring only about one thing.

7. *Keep careful track of dates and deadlines.* Once you have identified the legislation you are opposing or supporting, find out as far in advance as possible when hearings will be held and votes taken.

8. *Discover who is committed and who uncommitted on each issue.* More can be done with legislators who have not decided or announced where they stand than with those whose positions for or against are already definite, but don't neglect anybody whose vote is influential. Even publicly stated positions can shift, almost overnight, and those already on your side deserve your acknowledgment and continued support.

9. *Make appointments with legislators you want to see personally.* If the legislators are unavailable, ask to see their aides. Keep your appointments promptly and talk specifically about the issue with which you are concerned. (See "Visiting a Legislator")

10. *Be represented at hearings.* Here's where having a legislative committee member living in or near the state capital pays off. Testify at the hearings, either as an expert witness if you can get yourself invited or as a member of the concerned public. If you are expressing your own convictions and experience, make it clear that you are speaking as an individual; don't speak for your affiliate unless you are supporting an issue on which the organization has taken a stand. And don't be discouraged by the bad manners some legislators display: yawning, gossiping, or leaving in the middle of your testimony. Remember that somebody is probably listening, and that statements made at such hearings are a matter of record.

11. *Write letters strategically and selectively.* According to one experienced English teacher/lobbyist, most legislators discount letters about 65 or 70 percent, but the 30 to 35 percent possibility of effectiveness makes them worth the trouble. Unless the letters are clear, well-organized, dignified, to the point, and carefully proofread, however, it may be better not to send them. (See below about "Writing to a Legislator")

A good letter will say what the legislator has done that the writer agrees with and appreciates, then go on to ask the legislator to support the writer's position on a specific issue. But as the same experienced lobbyist has pointed out, English teachers have been known to write disastrous letters if they fail to consider how the political mind works. Letters in which the writer forgets that legislators seldom care about how overworked or underpaid teachers are can defeat their purpose. Letters in which the writer remembers that most legislators care, first about how their vote will look to the people back home, and second about how well students are being educated, stand a chance of succeeding.

Mass mailings can backfire. Many legislators are very good at spotting, and disregarding, form letters. Letters written by individuals to their own representatives are usually better. Even so, legislators are sensitive to the volume of mail they receive for or against an issue, and just before an especially important vote it may help to urge the entire affiliate membership to write. If the legislative committee does ask for blanket support, the membership should be sent an accurate, up-to-date list of legislative names and addresses; the exact name and number of the bill concerned; and a reminder of the kind of statments likely to be effective. Such mass efforts require a double mailing, first to the membership, then to members of the legislature, but a local group can help address and stuff envelopes for the membership, and the individual members who respond to the appeal will use their own postage.

12. *Don't neglect follow-up letters.* They can be crucial. Letters from the legislative committee, particularly, should not be limited to requests for support. Follow-up letters can state appreciation, remind the recipient of points made in earlier correspondence, or express regret that the legislator was unable, this time, to do what the writer had asked. Thank-you letters should be sent to legislators who have supported your position, whether or not the support was in response to your request.

13. *Make use of carbons; they can be as effective as the original letter.* For example, a copy of a letter to the State Department of Education can be sent to a legislator interested in the same issue, or copies of a letter to your own representative can be sent to other members of the committee responsible for the proposed bill. A carbon to the author of the bill is always a courtesy, whether or not the bill's author is sympathetic to your position.

14. *Send mailgrams or make phone calls just before a major deadline.* Mailgrams and phone calls are more effective than letters, and they are most effective if they are timed to arrive two or three days before a hearing or a floor vote. Such urgent communications can also be used while a committee is deciding to recommend a bill; it is sometimes easier to stop unfavorable legislation in committee than to defeat it after it arrives on the floor for a vote.

15. *Keep your comments in testimony, correspondence, and conversation definite and specific, rather than philosophical or general.* Emphasize how your recommendations will benefit children and thus the general welfare rather than how they will benefit you as a teacher. For instance, it is more forceful to oppose the publication of comparative test scores on the grounds that such publicity harms both children and neighborhoods than it is to be against such publication because it makes competent teachers look bad. Don't hesitate to show absurdities when they exist. English teachers in Hawaii, for instance, pointed out that one question on a proposed literacy test asked students to say what was meant by a railroad crossing sign, in spite of the fact that there are no railroads in Hawaii.

16. *Isolate the parts that make a bill objectionable and suggest specific changes in wording that will improve it.* Many legislators welcome such definite suggestions, and it is sometimes possible to make bills more acceptable by minor alterations, or at least to make them less damaging. When you do recommend these changes, give the name and number of the bill, the section, and the lines you are referring to.

17. *Support legislation whenever you can, even if it seems less than perfect.* When a genuine educational crisis occurs, lobbyists who get the reputation of being against everything lose whatever strength they might have had.

18. *Include the State Department of Education as part of your responsibility.* The legislature makes state law, but the Department of Education interprets and implements those laws, in the same way that federal regulatory agencies interpret and enforce the decisions Congress makes.

19. *Don't worry about the affiliate's losing its tax-exempt status.* The most recent federal legislation (July 1978) says that non-profit organizations are considered as lobbyists only if they meet all three of the following requirements: solicit and collect contributions; have as their main purpose influencing Congress; and use direct communication with members of Congress as their intended method. No affiliates are lobbyists according to this definition. Some states require individuals or organizational representatives to register as lobbyists if the money spent annually exceeds a specified amount, but these monetary limitations are far greater than English affiliates can afford.

20. *Make friends with local media people, in television, radio, and newspapers.* Try to get publicity for your position on pending legislation, but try also for general feature articles that will educate readers on such subjects as what test scores mean, why class size matters, what is known about how children (and older people) learn to read and write. These articles pay off indirectly in better public understanding and more support when crucial issues arise. One way to get coverage is by inviting well-known people to speak at conferences and meetings; in response to a call from the publicity chairperson, local radio and television stations will frequently agree to interview the speakers, and local papers will report the speech.

21. *Build professional goodwill with related organizations.* Invite them to be represented at your conferences, and send representatives to their meetings. When you can, be ready to support legislation important to them, and encourage their support of bills important to English teaching. If they are sympathetic to your position, you can suggest what it would be most useful for them to say or do and can tactfully offer to draft letters for them to send.

22. *See that the state English bulletin carries a regular legislative column.* It is difficult to keep such columns up-to-date, since copy must be written a month or two before the bulletin is actually circulated, but action on proposed legislation is sometimes slow, and if it does nothing else, such a column helps to raise teacher consciousness.

23. *Get a member of the legislative committee on the affiliate's resolutions committee.* The legislative committee member will be aware of legislative prejudices and can help to keep resolutions more realistic, better edited, more temperate, and therefore more likely to get favorable publicity.

24. *Keep a file of relevant, up-to-date resource material and use it to support your positions.* Among other possibilities, don't neglect the *SLATE Starter Sheets*, which are intended for this purpose. Duplicate them, take excerpts from them, circulate them outside the profession. They are written in lay language and backed up by reference to research material and scholarly articles.

25. *Don't be easily discouraged.* Remember that you will probably lose more often than you win, and that when you do succeed, the victories are likely to be only partial. Be willing to settle for, even work toward, the lesser of two evils. Remember that when you lose entirely, you are gaining experience and laying the groundwork for what can happen in two years—or five or ten.

Writing to a Legislator

Identify yourself as a registered voter in the legislator's district and/or as an officer for an organization.

Get the legislator's name and address right and use the accepted salutation: The Honorable Mary Evans
State Office Building 474
State Capital, State, Zip Code

Dear Senator Evans:

Limit the letter to one subject and, preferably, to one page.

Identify the bill with which you are concerned by number and name.

Be definite about what you are asking the legislator to do: support, oppose, or amend.

Give clear, specific reasons for your position, including the effect you think the bill will have locally.

Use your own knowledge and experience as support for what you say.

Be concise, polite, and definite; one or two strong supported reasons are better than a string of generalizations.

Express yourself in your own words; multiple copies of a form letter are usually self-defeating.

Proofread the letter carefully.

Make sure your name and address are complete and legible.

Visiting a Legislator

Before you talk to a legislator about an issue:

Get whatever information you can about the positions the legislator has already taken.

Make sure you know what the current status of the issue is.

Be prepared to explain how the results will affect people in the legislator's home district.

When you talk to the legislator:

Remember that time is limited and get to the point.

Identify yourself as a voter in the legislator's district (if you are), and explain what organization you are representing (if you do speak officially).

Refer to the relevant bill by its current official number.

Be clear whether you are asking for support or opposition.

Offer specific reasons for your position and show as definitely as you can how the proposed legislation will affect your own school and other schools in the state.

Keep the conversation courteous and friendly and avoid threats, either overt or implied.

Thank the legislator for past support, if there has been any, and for the support you hope to receive.

After you talk to the legislator:

Keep any promises you have made for further information and supply the information promptly.

Write a note thanking the legislator for the time you have been given.

Remember that a friendly reception is not a promise of support and don't feel cheated if the legislator votes against your position or abstains from voting; sometimes an abstention is the most you can accomplish.

Working on the Local Level

Although a legislative committee will spend most of its time on state issues, affiliate members can be effective with local boards of education. Decisions made there have the most immediate effect on what happens in their classrooms. In some districts, especially where unions do not exist, these procedures have been useful:

1. *Attend board meetings regularly.* Not just one observer, but several teachers, should go. Find out by watching how decisions are made. Find out which board members share your concerns, which occupy fixed positions, and which are honestly eager for information.

2. *Show your interest in the month-by-month, often dull, decisions the board has to make.* Don't go just to glare and be indignant when a "big" issue comes up—a censorship case or an unjustified firing—and, especially, don't show up in large numbers only when salaries are being determined.

3. *Be friendly, and show some appreciation for the time board members contribute.* Most school board members work without pay, and they are on the board either because they genuinely care about education or because they have a special ax to grind. It's unlikely that all the board members are grinding the same ax. If you have a member solely interested in getting sex education out of the curriculum, for instance, concentrate on the other members who care about broader issues.

4. *Remember that board decisions are supposed to be made in open meetings.* Most boards of education work under a "sunshine law," which requires that only personnel decisions can be handled in closed sessions.

5. *Realize that as a citizen you have a right to be heard, but don't let yourself become a permanent nuisance.* If you want to speak during the session, let the president know before the meeting begins and wait until you are called on.

6. *Work for passage of special levies and against proposals to limit such levies.* Working for levies the board has proposed can have two benefits: if the levy passes, both you and the local schools will gain; and whether or not it passes, the board will see you as helpful and cooperative.

7. *Keep the public informed on issues that affect English teaching.* Hold meetings for parents and other citizens interested in education; explain what you are trying to do and listen to what they want done. Get acquainted with the program chairs of civic groups such as Rotary, Lions, or Soroptimists, and offer to provide speakers for their meetings. If you are invited to speak, be careful not to antagonize the audience. Begin with the assumption that they share your concerns but not your specialized information. Welcome questions and answer them courteously; don't allow yourself to be baited. If you get a heckler (and you sometimes will), concede that viewpoints vary, and thank the audience for listening to yours.

8. *Write letters to the local papers.* Respond to editorials, news releases, columns, or letters that create a false impression about what good English teachers attempt to do. The smaller the area in which you live, the more chance your letter will have to be printed, but even large city newspapers welcome well-written letters, and most of them like to see some lively controversy in their letters section.

9. *Don't hesitate to participate in school board elections.* Unless other candidates or other issues are on the same ballot, very few voters turn out. It's legitimate to urge informed, intelligent people to stand for election, and it's legitimate to help them get elected once they have agreed to run. There is a certain amount of risk: in small districts, over-active partisanship, especially if it involves derogatory remarks about incumbents, can limit your future influence if your candidate loses. Whether the risk is worth it is up to you.

SOCTE
Rt. 2, Box 277
ATHENS, OHIO
45701

Dear Colleague:

Your name has been submitted by a member of the Executive Committee of the Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English as a teacher who might be interested in the SOCTE. We are therefore inviting you to join with English Language Arts teachers from around the region, state, and nation by becoming a member of our organization and a subscriber to FOCUS: TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS.

Past themes of FOCUS have included over thirty timely topics of interest to English Language Arts teachers. Among them: Teaching Shakespeare, Literature for Adolescents, Writing, Redefining and Redesigning English, Teaching British Literature, Teaching American Literature, Responding to the Basics, Reading, Language Learning, Literary Theory, Talented and Gifted, Women's Studies, Global Education, the Licking County Writing Project, Research in the Language Arts, Appalachian Literature, Excellence, Censorship's New Wave, Children's Literature, and Teaching Shakespeare II.

Each year's membership includes three issues of FOCUS plus announcements on our conferences and other occasional mailings. You may join for three years at the bargain rate of $25 or for one year for $10.

Sincerely,

Hazel K. Davis

Hazel K. Davis
Membership Chair

- -

SOCTE MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name______________________________

Street______________________________

City________________ State________ ZIP________

School______________________________

Home Phone(   )______________ School Phone(   )______________

New____ Renewal____ 1 year $10____ 3 years $25____

Make check payable to SOCTE. Mail to Hazel K. Davis, Rt. 2, Box 277, Athens, OH 45701. A one-year membership will run until October 1, 1987; three years until October 1, 1989.

NCTE National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

NCTE Membership Enrollment Form

Return to:
NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

(Please print)

Name ______________________________

Address ______________________________

City ______________________________

State ______________ Zip ____________

Phone Number H: (   ) ______________________

O: (   ) ______________________

(International orders must be prepaid in U.S. currency. Add $4 per year for *LA* and $2 per year for additional journals.)

☐ Remittance enclosed
(Make check payable to NCTE.)

☐ Bill me ______________________
(your signature)

☐ Charge my MasterCard ☐ Charge my VISA

Account No. ______________________

Expiration Date ____ ____ ____ ____

Your signature ______________________

Membership and Journal Options

Please check applicable boxes.

☐	Elementary Section/*Language Arts*	$30/yr.
☐	*LiveWire*	$15/yr.
☐	CEE/*English Education* NCTE membership is a prerequisite to CEE membership	$12/yr.

TOTAL $____

(Note: Membership dues in NCTE are tax deductible.)

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Benefits of NCTE membership to elementary language arts teachers:

- a subscription to *Language Arts*
- discounts of more than 30% on NCTE publications
- discounts at NCTE conventions and conferences
- voting rights (NCTE members elect their own section committee members and also national Council officers.)
- regular member mailings, including fliers about NCTE's most recent publications
- professional representation in Washington
- opportunities for involvement in Council programs
- group rates on accident and life insurance
- group travel plans

NCTE

Choices that Make a Difference

The National Council of Teachers of English is a nonprofit professional organization whose purpose is to improve the quality of English and language arts instruction in the elementary schools, middle schools, junior and senior high schools, and colleges across the country. The Council offers a variety of publications, programs, and services to meet the needs of its members. For elementary language arts teachers, there are a number of choices . . .

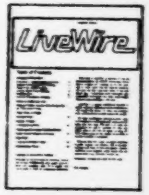
to the Language Arts Teacher

NCTE: Offering Choices for Continued Professional Growth

NCTE's Elementary Section Journal— *Language Arts*

Language Arts is the official publication of the Elementary Section of the National Council of Teachers of English. It's designed for teachers who want to help children discover language—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—as a means of learning about the world and about themselves. Each issue of *Language Arts* is directed to a specific theme of interest and importance to the elementary educator, providing various classroom strategies, ideas, methods, and opinions from specialists in elementary education. *Language Arts* is published eight times during the school year and is one of the many benefits of NCTE membership.

NCTE's New Elementary Publication— *LiveWire*



LiveWire is a lively new publication full of practical teaching ideas for the elementary classroom teacher. *LiveWire* is unique because its suggested teaching ideas and activities stem from sound educational theory. It's 8½" x 11" and three-hole punched to make it easy to create a desktop notebook. Each issue is sixteen pages long, and each page is filled with practical ideas to implement teaching language arts across the curriculum. *LiveWire* is published five times a year, in August, October, December, February, and April.

Additional Periodicals

In addition to *Language Arts* and *LiveWire*, NCTE publishes eight other periodicals, including journals for secondary and college teachers. Of special interest to the elementary teacher are *Research in the Teaching of English*, which presents research findings on a variety of topics as well as a continuous annotated bibliography of recent research; and *SLATE Newsletter*, which presents summaries of national news that affects language arts educators.

Constituent Organizations— for Professional Growth

Many Elementary Section members also take the opportunity to join and become a voting member of one or more constituent organizations of NCTE. The Conference on English Education (CEE) is for instructors involved in teacher preparation and inservice education. CEE offers its members many programs and benefits, including:

> *English Education*—presents articles on preservice and inservice education, continuing professional development, student teacher evaluation, and English curriculum, as well as reports of teacher training programs across the country. Published quarterly.

Professional Publications

Members have access to a comprehensive mix of theoretical and practical professional resources. NCTE publishes more than three hundred books, monographs, pamphlets, and cassettes, covering a broad range of language arts teaching concerns including: language development, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, oral language, creativity, and composition. Most of these publications are available to NCTE members at a more than thirty percent discount. Members annually receive the NCTE Catalog, featuring concise annotations of our professional publications. Throughout the year, book fliers and special updates keep members informed of new and important NCTE releases.

Professional Conventions

Members gain involvement, enrichment, and information through active participation in NCTE-sponsored meetings and interest groups.

Each year, during the week preceding Thanksgiving, thousands of English and language arts teachers meet at the NCTE Annual Convention to discuss current issues affecting the profession. Sessions cover such topics as integrated approaches to the language arts, learning environments that stimulate language development, and writing for mastery in the elementary grades. And throughout the Convention, the Elementary Section sponsors study groups, get-togethers, and workshops for its members.

Each spring elementary members are encouraged to attend the NCTE Spring Conference. This three-day meeting, with special sessions and workshops for elementary educators, features individual and group presentations and demonstrations—all devoted to an improved understanding of the problems that confront today's teachers.

Professional Council Programs

The Council is actively involved at local, state, and national levels to insure NCTE's input in formulating objectives, guidelines, policies, and legislation that have impact on the quality of English language arts. Through NCTE's National Relations Program the Council's voice is heard by members of the U.S. Congress and state legislatures who draft laws affecting education and by officers who carry out government education policies. Additionally, NCTE is a leader in Organizations for the Essentials of Education, a coalition of educational associations combating narrow definitions of "the basics" in school programs. Over forty NCTE committees and commissions study and report on a variety of concerns within the profession.

Make a choice that helps you continue growing as a teacher and an educator . . .

BELIEVING YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE: WITH NO APOLOGIES

by
Gail Bossert Klink

"For the individual, education is an end in itself and needs no secondary justification. For a society, it is what distinguishes civilized from uncivilized." This is a quotation from my application for the Teacher-In-Space Program in response to the statement, " Describe your philosophy of teaching." Now I am not the first person to come up with the idea that the purpose of education goes providing a labor force for major corporations. During those many years that I sat outside Granville Middle School waiting for my offspring to emerge from various activities, I often reflected upon the inscription carved above the entrance, " Education safeguards the nation."The nation, not AT&T. . . The idea goes back even further. " What we have heard and known for ourselves and what our ancestors have told us must not be withheld from their descendents, but be handed on to the next generation. These in their turn will tell their own children." Yes, already by Biblical times we had realized the purpose of education was not for the betterment of IBM.

Let's go back to my statement, "For the individual, education is an end in itself and needs no secondary justification. "Because I believe this so strongly, I refuse to apologize for the way I earn my living.

I am ashamed to admit here that I didn't always take that approach. Tired of the abuse, I began to lie at parties when asked what I did for a living. I told people I was an author and lecturer. It wasn't exactly a lie because I do write and I do give speeches. At the time, however, I was writing for professional journals where the only royalty was an extra copy of the issue. And I was speaking at professional conferences where not only did I not get paid, I had to pay to register for the conference. I just neglected to mention that I supplemented this by teaching one hundred eighty days a year.

Guilt took over and I began to take the offensive. Now the word offensive has two meanings, and I guess both were applicable to me. After being told that I wasn't doing my job because Johnny can't read today and he could twenty years ago, I would express my sympathy that the person's children were illiterate. Immediately I would be reassured that I was talking to the parent of the only children who can read today. Next I would ask what the speaker did for a living. If I had the good fortune to be talking to a lawyer, I would respond, "Our jails are over-crowded. Aren't you people doing your jobs?" A doctor would be asked why people were dying and a minister was held personally responsible for all sin in the world. If I lucked upon someone who worked for Ford I mentioned their cars popping out of park and driving by themselves. On a good night when I met a politician I would suggest merit pay for Congress. I thoroughly enjoyed a party where the manufacturer of a $3,000 stereo with a ninety day guarantee was in attendance. Wouldn't our jobs be easy if we only had to give a ninety day guarnantee for our product! But our guarantee has to extend to infinity because that's what will be affected if our product is faulty.

Fine wine mellows with age and cheese grows stronger. I like to think of my life as one glorious wine and cheese party. Now I tell them with a certain dignity that I am a proud member of a noble profession in a country that is not at risk and that is eternally indebted to me and to people like me. They usually try to end the conversation at this point, but I don't let them. After all, they decided to start the conversation; I will decide when to end it.

So I tell them about this unique experiment we are all part of, universal public education. No other country attempts to educate one hundred percent of its citizens. Some attempt to train all, but only we attempt to educate all. Let me make sure we all understand the difference. Albert Speer was asked how, with the sensitivity he showed in his later writings, he could have been a Nazi, using his talent to design instruments of genocide. His response was that he had been trained as a youth. It wasn't until those years in Spandau prison where he passed his time studying literature, history, and the arts, that he had become educated. Education must include everything, not only the Three R's, but music, computers, cheerleading, art, football. . . Education is not training, and mere training is not education.

This is a unique experiment in the history of humanity. No civilization has ever attemped this. We have no requirements for a child to be part of our school system. We will take a child regardless of race, religion, ecomonic status, behavior, politics, intelligence, physical condition, ability to speak the native language, citizenship status, or even parents' tax-payment record.

If a child can't come to us, we will go to the child. And we give a one hundred percent guarantee, playing with that rather unstacked deck, that the child will be better for having been with us. We give an eighty-five percent guarantee that they will be able to read and write and be functioning members of society.

In addition, we will offer the skills necessary to function in a democratic society where it is each citizen's responsibility to be part of the government's decision-making process. Jefferson was right; educating for life in a totalitarian society is much easier. He knew that to safeguard this nation and its cumbersome and inefficient system called democracy, we would need an educated populace.

So why, if we are so good at what we do, are they saying all those awful things about us?

Whenever something is done exceptionally well, the public's reaction is progressive and predictable. First the people are in awe that such a feat should have been accomplished. Next they begin to demand that you do it all the time. The great feat is eventually ignored. And finally, it is criticized. So it has been with education. So it is with the space program. NASA decided to do something about it. In their desire to regenerate an interest in the miracles they perform everyday, NASA decided to send an ordinary citizen into space, beginning with a teacher, followed by a journalist and then perhaps an artist and a poet. The rest is history.

If the public's reaction to NASA's daily miracles is from awe to complacency to apathy to criticism, what are we doing to reverse the natural progression of the public's reaction to the miracles we perform daily. Who is going around speaking for education? NASA picked a teacher first because they know how well we do what we do best, teach. So why, then, aren't we teaching people about our education system. When was the last time you told somebody just what is it we do? Have you told anybody recently about our miracles? If not, who do you think is telling them? Nobody if not we, nobody!

Sometimes in education we are awfully foolish. In 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik. I was a senior in high school and within forth-eight hours I was studying Russian. That was education's reaction to the panic that swept the nation. Let's call it the "The Russians are ahead of us syndrome." Educational reforms began because Ivan could read and Johnny couldn't. That isn't what I am told at cocktail parties today, but that's what they said then.

Like so many reform movements, we almost destroyed what we were trying to fix. Our modern education system began because the Industrial Revolution required us to turn farmers into assemblyline workers who could read, and write, and cipher. Men like Carnegie, Firestone, and Ford even paid for the schools, putting small childern in tall buildings, creating in them an assemblyline mentality and giving them assemblyline education. The childern were put in stationary chairs that offerred them less personal space than they will have in the grave.

Over the years, teachers tried to improve our schools in spite of the system set up for us by the industrial giants. But in 1957, we pushed math and science and almost traded in our education system for a training system, much like the one that produced Albert Speer. Whenever one discipline is lofted above the others, no matter which one, the result is training.

Some of us held fast to our belief in education rather than training, as we are doing today, as the heirs of Carnegie, Firestone and Ford are crying for excellence. Why are they crying for excellence? Because they no longer need assemblyine workers. . . In today's modern manufacturing they rather need creative workers who can think.

Nevertheless, they have declared our nation at risk, have demanded excellence, and have made recommendations. What have they recommended? More of the same! Requiring an extra year of English or an extra year of math without providing the funds to hire extra English teachers or extra math teachers will result in larger classes and no more personal contact time for anybody. Just more assemblyline! This will not achieve excellence, but rather endurance.

So then, are we a nation at risk? Not yet, but we could become one if this notion of "good enough" is allowed to continue when people think of public education. Let me give you a concrete example of "good enough." In our school we are issued masking tape that neither maskes nor tapes. It is low-bid and proof that, except for the classroom teacher, you get what you pay for. Inside the core, however, is the true story, the sad story. It says, "3-M School Utility Tape," carefully marked least this inferior product accidently get into the hands of real people, of the business community that will not tolerate such lack of quality. What nerve that they thought this trash was good enough for the nation's children! Who gave them that message?

Did it come from any of us? I tell people that when it comes to our education system, "good enough" just isn't good enough! When I speak to business people about NASA and our education system, I tell them:

> No classroom should look any less attractive than your offices;
>
> No school should use any equipment any more antiquated than what you use;
>
> No child should be asked to suffer any indignities you would not tolerate;
>
> No teacher should be treated with any less respect than each of you demand.

I challenge you to go out and tell them the same.

I wanted to ride the space shuttle for three reasons: I wanted to do something few people alive could do; I wanted to make history; I wanted to touch the future. I am never going to ride the shuttle, but I still am fulfilling my dreams. Everyday I do something few people alive can do. Everyday I make history. Everyday I touch the future. I teach.

N.B. Gail Bossert Klink, Ohio's Teacher-in-Space is a professional speaker and a half-time teacher of Spanish and English at Newark High School. "With No Apologies" is an excerpt from a motivational talk of the same name that she does for teachers.

EVERYONE IS ASKING:

HOW CAN I BECOME A PRESENTER AT A CONFERENCE?

AND THE ANSWER COMES:

Think of what you have done well professionally. It could be:

a great lesson plan
a lesson plan that includes all steps of the writing process
a lesson plan that integrates the language arts
or one for writing or reading across the curriculum
research you did for a course
a political action you took within your school or community
a project you carried out for your affiliate
work you did on curriculum at your school

If you are proud of it, it's worth sharing! You're a professional!

Consider whether you have already shared your topic with others:

in the faculty room
at a committee or department meeting
at a school board meeting
at an affiliate workshop
at the dinner table

If some enjoyed it, others will too!

Consider a topic targeted by National Council for this year:

curriculum development: involving teachers
corporal punishment
listening
alternatives to teaching grammar in isolation
alternative models for assessment
racial and ethnic minorities in teaching
improving conditions for teachers of English-class size

Fill out the one page Proposal form on the back and cross your fingers!

or

Obtain a "Call for Proposal" form from:

your affiliate's liason to OCTELA, or
Dawn Holt Anderson
Newark High School
Newark, OH 43055
(614) 345-9831 ext. 32

You'll be glad you did!

BELIEVING YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE: A PROMPT

Not only is your expertise seldom recongnized and appreciated by others, in stress of daily teaching, under attack from national and local media, you may begin to question your own experiences. Take a few minutes to jot below things you do well. Think of methods you use and your interpersonal skill in dealing with students and peers, as well as of your expertise in content areas.

Now look at the back of the OCTELA proposal form on the next page. You may decide to submit a proposal for a presentation or to write an article for a journal or the local paper. Believe in the value of your own experience.

UTILIZING RESEARCH

by
Karolyn Holm Burkett

The March 1986 Research Bulletin from the Center on Evaluation, Development and Research from Phi Delta Kappa is titled "Helping Teachers Use Educational Research." It states that, "As the body of significant educational research grows, it is alarming that so much of these valuable findings are either ignored or misapplied by the audience for whom they are ultimately designed (or for whom they should be designed): the practitioner." The report concludes that researchers need to bring the teacher back into the design and implementation of research, improve the means of dissemination, and make the atmosphere of change an atmosphere of security. I agree with these conclusions. One of the most distressing statements in the article, however, was from John Zaharik. In attempting to explain the lack of general acceptance of research; he suggests that "teachers in large numbers are closed-minded, lazy, unimaginative, or simply devious. They are resistant to any penetration by a new practice, no matter how well researched and promising the practice is." His "teacher-educator explanation" puts the blame on "professors, supervisors, principals, and others who educate teachers, (who) provide insufficient training or who provide inappropriate direction."[1] It would be difficult to find a more demeaning, paternalistic statement.

I teach in a medium-sized city school district with no language arts supervisor. I am sure that my situation is not unique. The only way I come across research is through reading professional journals and attending conferences--and even then it is difficult to find research that is applicable to my discipline and grade level. Since the advent of ERIC it is more feasible for me to find applicable research. However, it takes time and money for me to keep even marginally aware of current research. Whether I like it or not, I am the "expert" on language arts in my school district--I and other fellow teachers who are active in professional organizations. We decided several years ago, with the help of a new superintendent, to try to change the way research is used by teachers.

Several of us have carved out a niche for ourselves on a curriculum committee for language arts and have tried to utilize research. The committee consists of teachers from all grade levels and an administrator to help facilitate the work of the committee. One of our first tasks was to choose a new language arts text and a new spelling book. You can see how we began by looking at the time line. We gathered as much information as we could from our reading, from university professors, from an ERIC search, and from the state department. We purchased books and gave teachers assignments to read over the summer, so that we would have some idea of the current state of research on the teaching of language arts and spelling. We devised and distributed an opinionaire to students, teachers, administrators, and parents about the state of the language arts program in our school district, so we would have some direction about what people thought needed to be included in our program. When we discovered the research on spelling, for instance, we made the teachers in the district aware of the research and told them that we would use that research to inform our choice of a spelling program. You can see our memo to teachers. And we devised a textbook evaluation form that included the main points that research and our survey told us needed to be included in a new series that we adopted.

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[1] John A. Zahorik. "Can teachers adoopt research findings? Journal of Teacher Education, v. 35, no. 1, Jan./Feb. 1984, p. 34.

One of the interesting facts that we found about spelling was that researchers had been saying the same things about a need to change the way we teach spelling for fifty years, but most teachers were unaware of the research. Textbook publishers had continued to publish the old tried and true books and no one had made teachers aware of the research. Since that time, NCTE and other publishers have published books on spelling, but when we started our search for research, it was difficult to find what we wanted to read. Since that time, also, more administrators and teachers have become interested in using research-based practices in the classroom, but finding and utilizing research that you know is valid is still a difficult task. Again, you must believe your own experience and look carefully at research that is presented to you. Some of the early research on class size, for instance, was done exclusively with early elementary grades, and yet was being used by administrators to justify keeping larger classes at the secondary level. Eternal vigilance is the price of excellence.

N.B. Karolyn Burkett is chair of the English Department at Newark High School and teaches grades 10 and 12. She is past president of the Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English and their liasion officer to NCTE. She is president-elect of Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts.

THE ERIC NETWORK

ERIC, the Educational Resources Information Center currently sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education, is a national educational information system designed to do the following:

- **MAKE AVAILABLE** hard-to-find educational materials, such as research reports, literature reviews, curriculum guides, conference papers, projects or program reviews, and government reports
- **ANNOUNCE** these materials in *Resources in Education* (RIE), a monthly journal containing abstracts of each item
- **PUBLISH** annotations of journal articles in *Current Index to Journals in Education* (CIJE), a monthly guide to current educational periodicals
- **PREPARE** magnetic tapes (available by subscription) of the ERIC database (RIE and CIJE) for computer retrieval
- **CREATE** products that analyze and synthesize educational information
- **PROVIDE** a question-answering service

Most of the educational material announced in RIE may be seen on microfiche in one of the more than 700 educational institutions (college and university libraries; local, state, and federal agencies; and not-for-profit organizations) that have complete ERIC collections. It can also be purchased from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) on microfiche (MF), a 4" x 6" microfilm card containing up to 96 pages of text; or paper copy (PC), a photographically reproduced copy.

Journal articles announced in CIJE are not available through ERIC, but can be obtained from a local library collection, from the publisher, or from University Microfilms International.

ERIC/RCS

Where would you go to find the following kinds of information?

- Suggested activities and instructional materials to teach elementary school students listening skills
- Instruction in writing that focuses on the writing process
- A list of suggestions for parent involvement in reading instruction

Your answer should include the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS). Each year ERIC/RCS helps thousands of people find useful information related to education in reading, English, journalism, theater, and speech. While we cannot meet every educational information need, anyone with a strong interest in or involvement with teaching communication skills should look to ERIC/RCS as a valuable resource.

The ERIC/RCS Clearinghouse is located at the headquarters of the National Council of Teachers of Engish (NCTE), a professional association of nearly 90,000 members from all levels of teaching, whose purpose is to improve the quality of instruction in English. NCTE holds the federal contract to operate the ERIC/RCS Clearinghouse.

Write or call ERIC/RCS for the following information:

- Submitting material for inclusion in ERIC
- Conducting manual or computer searches of the ERIC database
- Locations of ERIC computer search services
- Names of organizations and institutions near you that have ERIC microfiche collections
- Lists of ERIC/RCS publications

ERIC/RCS PUBLICATIONS

ERIC publications represent a low-cost way to build your own personal educational library and an excellent addition to a school professional library. These publications are the results of the clearinghouse's efforts to analyze and synthesize the literature of education into research reviews, state-of-the-art studies, interpretative reports on topics of high current interest, and booklets presenting research and theory plus related practical activities for the classroom teacher.

Many of the ERIC/RCS publications may be ordered from the National Council of Teachers of English. Some are also available from the International Reading Association or the Speech Communication Association. A publications brochure is available from the clearinghouse, upon request.

No-Cost ERIC/RCS Products

ERIC/RCS produces the following items that are free upon request:

- **MINIBIBLIOGRAPHIES** of recent documents on more than 60 topics selected for their usefulness to the classroom teacher and printed on 3½" x 8½" card stock
- **ERIC/RCS NEWS BULLETINS**, semiannual newsletters concerning clearinghouse activities and publications, featuring noteworthy articles for communication skills educators
- **ERIC DIGESTS** summarize information on topics of current interest

NEWARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH OPINION INVENTORY

1980

The Newark City School District is in the process of evaluating the teaching of language arts and English in kindergarten through the 12th grade. In order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of our present program, your opinion is very important.

Won't you please take a few minutes to answer the following questions? There are no right or wrong answers.

DIRECTIONS

PLEASE READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY. NOTE THAT THERE ARE SEVERAL RESPONSES TO EACH ITEM. SELECT THE RESPONSE WHICH MOST CLEARLY REPRESENTS YOUR FEELING, AND CIRCLE THE SYMBOL IMMEDIATELY TO THE RIGHT OF THE RESPONSE INDICATED.

SYMBOLS

STRONGLY AGREE - SA
AGREE - A
DISAGREE - D
STRONGLY DISAGREE - SD
NO OPINION - NO

EXAMPLE:

Our schools produce students who can use the library effectively. SA [✓ A] D SD NO

1. Our schools produce skillful readers. SA A D SD NO

2. Our schools produce students who enjoy reading. SA A D SD NO

3. Our schools produce students who understand, enjoy, and appreciate literature. SA A D SD NO

4. Our schools produce students who can express themselves clearly in writing. SA A D SD NO

5. Our schools produce students who write legibly. SA A D SD NO

6. Our schools produce students who enjoy writing. SA A D SD NO

7. Our schools produce students who spell correctly. SA A D SD NO

8. Our schools produce students who can express themselves clearly when speaking. SA A D SD NO

9. Our schools provide opportunities for students to express their ideas through discussion with teachers and/or each other. SA A D SD NO

10. Our schools produce students who speak and write the English language correctly. SA A D SD NO

11. Our schools produce students who understand English grammar. SA A D SD NO

12. Our schools produce students who are able to reason and think critically. SA A D SD NO

13. Our schools produce students who are active listeners. SA A D SD NO

14. Our schools produce students who can critically evaluate mass media (TV, radio, movies, newspapers, etc.) SA A D SD NO

15. Our schools produce students who can critically evaluate advertising and propaganda techniques. SA A D SD NO

16. Our schools produce students whose language is adequate for their chosen vocations. SA A D SD NO

17. Our schools produce students who are able to continue to shape their values through their skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. SA A D SD NO

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18. Our schools provide students with adequate opportunities to practice language skills. SA A D SD NO

19. Our schools provide adequate textbooks for learning language skills. SA A D SD NO

20. Our schools provide adequate audio-visual equipment for learning language skills. SA A D SD NO

21. Our schools provide adequate library materials for learning language skills. SA A D SD NO

22. Our schools provide adequate physical facilities for learning language skills. SA A D SD NO

23. Our school staff uses English effectively. SA A D SD NO

24. Teachers of subjects other than English assume responsibility for teaching language skills. SA A D SD NO

25. Students and parents understand how students' work is graded in the language arts. SA A D SD NO

What suggestions do you have for improving the language arts/English program?

INTERNALIZING A RATIONALE

by
Dawn Holt Anderson

Once teachers are aware of what the research says about teaching and the acquisition of skill in language, they are eager to put the information into use in the classroom and impatient to have the research affect the school's entire curriculum. But there is an important step that must come first--that of internalizing a rationale. To do so, teachers will need to

-formulate a clear vision of purpose and philosophy,

-articulate a rationale,

-share the rationale with others,

-involve them in the development of basic statements that will undergird and inform the direction for future actions and policies.

If this step of developing and articulating a rationale is passed over, there is danger of sporadic, hodgepodge reaction to random issues. But once a rationale has been internalized, teachers will be capable of assured assertive action based on a central vision which can be articulated clearly and convincingly.

Some specific steps are helpful in internalizing a rationale:

1. Circulate articles and pamphlets such as the Slate Starter Sheet, "What are the Basics?" and NCTE's "The Essentials of English."

2. As the occasion arises in meetings and private conversations, create an informal dialogue about the issues raised in the professional articles.

3. Within a month, distribute copies of your school's language arts philosophy to all teachers affected by the document.

4. Ask that suggestions for revision be sent to a member of the curriculum committee.

5. Arrange with the administrators in charge of curriculum to have a day of released time. Make it an all day meeting in a comfortable and attractive setting. Dawes Arboretum was the site for one such meeting; it provided a change of pace and an impetus for creativity.

6. As the first order of business, prewrite the new Language Arts Philosophy. Brainstorm and list on a board issues that must be covered.

7. Then, as a group of professionals, compose the new Philosophy.

This process empowers all teachers involved as they share in the process of curriculum development and take responsibility for articulating the rationale that will undergird the curriculum that each is responsible to teach.

An additional method to use in internalizing a rationale is to "practice what we teach." When a few teachers have learned enough about the research on writing to want to affect a change in the teaching of English language arts throughout the district, sit down together and write a collection of one-liners from the research on writing.

This activity involves collecting the brief statements heard and read here and there over a year or more of classes, workshops, meetings. The process of recalling and organizing these statements helps to clarify what it is that we know. Next, add sections to unify the collection into a meaningful document:

1. An introduction to explain that an excellent composition program must reflect the research;
2. A statement of reminder that the State Department has mandated such a research-based program. This statement is intended to convince the resistant that a change is coming, not only because it is right, but also because it is required.
3. End notes to identify sources for each item of research;
4. an extensive bibliography to encourage others to pursue the research on writing.

In developing such a document, the compilers are forced to pull together all the pieces of information they have gleaned about the teaching of writing. Writing IS discovery, and with this document, teachers will have discovered their rationale. On it they can base a change in their own teaching, and organize an effort to revitalize the teaching of language arts throughout their school districts.

N.B. Dawn Holt Anderson teaches Sophmore and Senior English at Newark High School, Newark, Ohio. She is a former chair of the Curriculum Development Committee Program, chair of the 1987 OCTELA Conference, and a member of the Steering Committee for SLATE at the national level.

Essentials of English

The study of English includes knowledge of the language itself, development of its use as a basic means of communication, and appreciation of its artistry as expressed in literature. Teachers of English trace the origins of the language in the past, study its development in the present, and recognize that continuing change in the future will keep the language and the literature alive, flexible and adaptable to the highest expression of which the human being is capable.

The use of English involves skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and observing. The development of these skills is a lifelong process. The extent to which they are developed can influence an individual's ability to become self-sufficient and lead a productive life.

LANGUAGE

Language is a subject worthy of study in itself, but language in use always exists in a setting involving people and situations. Language is a primary way individuals communicate what they think and feel. They find self-identity through language, shape their knowledge and experience by means of it, and depend upon it as a lifelong resource for expressing their hopes and feelings.

Children acquire language at an early stage and internalize much of its grammar through use before formal training in school begins. Continuing attention to language makes students aware how language functions and helps them control and use it in increasingly effective ways. Language is therefore basic to learning in all disciplines. Skillful use of language may be the single most important means of realizing the overarching goal of education to develop informed, thinking citizens.

By studying language, students should

- learn how the English language has developed, continues to change, and survives because it is adaptable to new times
- understand that varieties of English usage are shaped by social, cultural, and geographical differences
- recognize that language is a powerful tool for thinking and learning
- become aware how grammar represents the orderliness of language and makes meaningful communication possible
- recognize how context–topic, purpose, audience–influences the structure and use of language
- understand how language can act as a unifying force among the citizens of a nation

LITERATURE

Literature is the verbal expression of the human imagination and one of the primary means by which a culture transmits itself. The reading and study of literature add a special dimension to students' lives by broadening their insights, allowing them to experience vicariously places, people, and events otherwise unavailable to them, and adding delight and wonder to their daily lives.

Through their study and enjoyment of literature, students should

- realize the importance of literature as a mirror of human experience, reflecting human motives, conflicts, and values
- be able to identify with fictional characters in human situations as a means of relating to others; gain insights from involvement with literature
- become aware of important writers representing diverse backgrounds and traditions in literature
- become familiar with masterpieces of literature, both past and present
- develop effective ways of talking and writing about varied forms of literature
- experience literature as a way to appreciate the rhythms and beauty of the language
- develop habits of reading that carry over into adult life

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication is language in action, by which individuals participate in the affairs of society through reading, writing, speaking, listening, and using electronic media. The study of English develops fundamental communication skills that prepare students to engage in fluent and responsible communication and to analyze information that comes to them.

Reading

Students should

- recognize that reading functions in their lives as a pleasurable activity as well as a means of acquiring knowledge
- learn from the very beginning to approach reading as a search for meaning
- develop the necessary reading skills to comprehend material appearing in a variety of forms
- learn to read accurately and make valid inferences
- learn to judge literature critically on the basis of personal response and literary quality

Writing

Students should

- learn to write clearly and honestly
- recognize that writing is a way to learn and develop personally as well as a way to communicate with others
- learn ways to generate ideas for writing, to select and arrange them, to find appropriate modes for expressing them, and to evaluate and revise what they have written
- learn to adapt expression to various audiences
- learn the techniques of writing for appealing to others and persuading them
- develop their talents for creative and imaginative expression
- recognize that precision in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and other elements of manuscript form is a part of the total effectiveness of writing

Speaking

Students should learn

- to speak clearly and expressively about their ideas and concerns
- to adapt words and strategies according to varying situations and audiences, from one-to-one conversations to formal, large-group settings
- to participate productively and harmoniously in both small and large groups
- to present arguments in orderly and convincing ways
- to interpret and assess various kinds of communication, including intonation, pause, gesture, and body language that accompany speaking

Listening

Students should

- learn that listening with understanding depends on determining a speaker's purpose
- learn to attend to detail and relate it to the overall purpose of the communication
- learn to evaluate the messages and effects of mass communication

Using Media

Students should

- become aware of the impact of technology on communication and recognize that electronic modes such as recording, film, television, videotape, and computers require special skills to understand their way of presenting information and experience
- realize that new modes of communication demand a new kind of literacy

THINKING SKILLS

Because thinking and language are closely linked, teachers of English have always held that one of their main duties is to teach students *how* to think. Thinking skills, involved in the study of all disciplines, are inherent in the reading, writing, speaking, listening and observing involved in the study of English. The ability to analyze, classify, compare, formulate hypotheses, make inferences, and draw conclusions is essential to the reasoning processes of all adults. The capacity to solve problems, both rationally and intuitively, is a way to help students cope successfully with the experience of learning within the school setting and outside. These skills may be grouped in three major categories.

Creative Thinking

Students should learn

- that originality derives from the uniqueness of the individual's perception, not necessarily from an innate talent
- that inventiveness involves seeing new relationships
- that creative thinking derives from their ability not only to look, but to see; not only to hear, but to listen; not only to imitate, but to innovate; not only to observe, but to experience the excitement of fresh perception.

Logical Thinking

Students should learn

- to create hypotheses and predict outcomes
- to test the validity of an assertion by examining the evidence
- to understand logical relationships
- to construct logical sequences and understand the conclusions to which they lead
- to detect fallacies in reasoning
- to recognize that "how to think" is different from "what to think"

Critical Thinking

Students should learn

- to ask questions in order to discover meaning
- to differentiate between subjective and objective viewpoints; to discriminate between opinion and fact
- to evaluate the intentions and messages of speakers and writers, especially attempts to manipulate the language in order to deceive
- to make judgments based on criteria that can be supported and explained

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

The study of English offers varied opportunities for the individual to mature intellectually and emotionally. We believe in basic competency in Engish as a means by which the individual can acquire self-sufficiency and work independently in all disciplines. We believe further in challenges to both the analytical and creative capabilities of our students.

Toward accomplishing these aims, we as teachers of English hold ourselves responsible for

- helping all students become literate and capable of functioning in an increasingly complex society
- directing them to read and view materials appropriate to their abilities and interests
- encouraging them to exchange ideas, listen perceptively, and discuss vigorously
- urging them to write honestly in the spirit of open inquiry
- helping them expand their interests and reach their fullest potential through language

By contributing in these ways, we hope to expand the capacities of the human intellect and to preserve the tradition of free thought in a democratic society.

Single copies of this statement are available free upon request, and may be copied without permission from NCTE. Multiple copies are available at a bulk rate of U.S. $5 per 100, prepaid only. Send request to NCTE Order Department, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

Approved October 1982
by the Executive Committee,
National Council of Teachers of English

REACHING ADMINISTRATION AND PARENTS:

REACHING OUT

by
Judith Keck

Each of us deplores the lack of support for English Language Arts programs by administrators, parents, and the community. We often consider ourselves fortunate if we're not the object of outright attack. In the following section are some examples of ways that English Language Arts teachers can reach out and become speakers in their own behalf.

Here are some points for your consideration:

- We have an obligation to act in our own behalf. If we don't speak out, we are foolish to expect that some parent, principal, superintendent, or supervisor will speak for us.
- Support won't come without information. Teach your administrators, parents, and community members what they need to know.
- Hold public information sessions led by a team of teachers who can share this responsibility; it makes the workload lighter.
- Offer instruction, evidence, and resources for further information.
- Show real examples of student work,when applicable, that illustrates your points.
- Beware of information overload. Select a few key points and follow that with either small packets of reading material or further information sessions.
- Prepare your materials wisely and well. Don't bury people in a blizzard of papers. Materials should be easy to read and focused.
- Speak out in support and encouragement for those instances where positive events are happening (See "Are You Still Writing, Rick?")
- Likewise speak out where injustice against the English Language Arts occurs. (See letter to Louise Carr.)

Yes, it's scary business and it's risk-taking as well, but English Language Arts teachers have better communications skills than most anyone else in the school community. We can speak and write well, and we ought to demonstrate those skills for ourselves and for our students.

N.B. Judith Keck is curriculum consultant with the Licking County Office of Education and immediate past president of the Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts. She is a member of the NCTE commission to revise Your Reading, the junior high book list.

Incentives for Excellence

What School Board Members Can Do to Encourage Excellence in Their English Language Arts Programs

A Message from the President of NCTE:

If I were a school board member, I would feel perplexed and even put upon by the various task forces, committees, and commissions that have issued prescriptions for what is allegedly ailing the American schools. Of course, it is school board members and school administrators who will be required to make the key decisions about what will be done to promote excellence in education.

Yours will be hard decisions. The various reform reports do not always agree with each other, and board members will have to choose which reports and recommendations to heed.

However, all the reports agree on the importance of improved English and language arts programs in school reform. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are seen as the most essential skills in the work of any school. Real improvement in education will depend on vigorous, well-informed, carefully designed English language arts programs.

Inspired teachers are at the heart of your program. Your English teachers need help and encouragement if the language arts program is to have maximum effect on your students. The National Council of Teachers of English has prepared this pamphlet to suggest how you can help English language arts teachers help themselves move toward excellence.

Teachers from all over the country have contributed ideas to the suggestions which follow. You and your staff members can certainly add to the list in view of local needs.

Many of the suggestions in this pamphlet are inexpensive and require relatively little effort. When school boards and administrators initiate one or more of these plans, they send English and language arts teachers an important message: "We care about you and what you are doing."

In presenting these Incentives for Excellence, NCTE hopes to help you support English language arts teachers in their work. I urge you to join with us in taking action for excellence in English.

Sincerely,

Stephen Tchudi

Stephen Tchudi
Michigan State University
President, National Council of Teachers of English

Incentives for Excellence in the Teaching of English Language Arts

What School Board Members Can Do

1. Declare that high skill in the uses of English is a priority in the school district.

Many students and many teachers perceive that all the subjects, somehow, are equal in importance. They are not. Competence in the use of language—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—is the basis for all other learning. A subject is not fully known until the learner can talk or write about it in his or her own words. A principal cause of failure of college students and young people in the workplace is inability to handle language effectively. Almost invariably, achievement in life is accompanied by high achievement in language.

It follows that all teachers of all subjects have a major responsibility to foster growth in language skills. While the English language arts teacher is a specialist trained to show students how to read, write, listen, and speak, all other teachers must share in the task. Studies have shown that, outside of English classes, most teachers are not fulfilling their responsibility to foster growth in language skill.

The school board can take the most important and necessary first step toward excellence in English by declaring that development of high skill in the uses of English is a priority in the school district. At the same time the board can declare that all teachers must help achieve this first priority.

2. Find ways to reduce the size of classes in which composition is taught.

The teaching of writing is the great unfinished work of American education. Under present conditions, it is not possible for all students to learn to write well nor is it possible to teach writing as well as teachers know how to teach it. In *High School*, the report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Ernest L. Boyer, former U.S. Commissioner of Education wrote:

> "The most frequent reason given for the failure to teach writing is the extraordinary demands it places on the teacher's time. Today most English teachers meet five classes daily, with 25 to 30 students each. If the teacher gives one writing assignment every week to each student, he or she spends, at a minimum, more than 20 hours correcting papers."

For nearly fifty years, the National Council of Teachers of English has advocated that composition classes have no more than 25 students and that teachers have no more than four such classes. Similarly, at the elementary school, where the most fundamental work of all occurs in the teaching of writing, NCTE advocates no more than 25 students per classroom. Students must learn to write by writing, and their efforts to express themselves need and deserve the careful attention of their teachers.

These class size standards are important not because they benefit English language arts teachers, but because they make it possible to teach written composition so that *all* students can become competent and confident writers.

3. Establish a climate and provide the means for professional development of English language arts teachers.

With very modest expenditure, school boards can stimulate their English language arts teachers to become continuing learners. Teachers want professional growth for themselves and their colleagues. Among the possible activities by which school boards can encourage professional growth are these:

a. Provide effective inservice programming, particularly for subject-specific workshops, using local teacher talent as well as outside speakers of the teachers' choice.

b. Set up a travel fund so that numbers of teachers can receive at least partial support to attend state and national professional meetings.

c. Pay fees for teachers who wish to subscribe to professional journals of English language arts associations, state and national.

d. Develop a continuing education fund so that within a five-year period all teachers can return to summer school with district support for study of English and related disciplines.

e. Establish a system of part- or full-paid sabbaticals to permit teachers to undertake university study.

4. Provide services and facilities which will support the teaching of English language arts.

Effective teaching is hard work, and too much of that precious ingredient–time–is spent in getting to needed resources and materials or even in finding a place to plan and think. School boards can help by seeing that English language arts teachers have time, space, and resources to work efficiently and effectively.

a. Retain one or more district-wide consultants to foster professional growth, coordination of curriculum, and acquisition and use of professional materials.

b. In secondary schools, designate strong teachers as department heads and give them time to help other teachers.

c. Provide language arts workrooms to hold a professional library, files of language arts-related materials, and copying equipment.

d. Provide clerical assistance to English language arts teachers so they can spend more time working with students.

e. Provide elementary teachers with an hour of planning time each day.

f. Seek PTA or business funds to allow each English language arts teacher at least $50 per year for needed materials and books.

5. Recognize achievements of students and teachers.

The least costly but nonetheless important change in school practice is providing encouragement to teachers and students for work well done. Teachers increasingly feel that school board members and administrators don't care about the achievements of teachers and students. School boards can do a great deal to improve the psychological climate in which teachers work.

a. Through such means as honors assemblies, make full note of achievements of students who excel, such as those who are declared winners in the NCTE Achievement Awards in Writing Program, winners of local writing contests, or those who excel in speech and drama activities.

b. Establish ways to alert the press to achievements of students and teachers.

c. Create policies which support the professional activities of English language arts teachers in regional, state, and national associations.

d. Send personal notes to teachers and students who have achieved personal distinction.

e. Encourage creation of school or departmental newsletters so that news of the English language arts program can be delivered to the community.

f. Support establishment and continuation of student publications, such as literary magazines and poetry collections.

g. Set aside time on the board agenda to hear in detail about the progress and problems of the English language arts program.

OCTELA POSITION ON PROFESSIONAL LEAVE

Teachers should be encouraged to join and participate in professional organizations to stay abreast of current research and materials and to interact with other professionals with similar interests and concerns. Budget cuts which eliminate opportunities for teachers to attend conferences pose a threat to professional growth and therefore to effective teaching.

Membership in NCTE and its affiliates and participation in conferences, workshops, and seminars improve teaching and morale and enable English teachers, at a relatively low cost in time and money, to fulfill more adequately their responsibilities.* Specific opportunities provided by active membership include:

1. Sharing of ideas on curriculum and teaching methods
2. Sponsorship of student writing contests
3. Presentation of new materials through conferences and publications
4. Opportunities for interaction with well-known scholars and writers
5. Liaison with the State Department of Education
6. Professional journals
7. Development of state-wide networks of educators with various fields of expertise and influence
8. Encouragement through personal discussions of similar concerns
9. Appreciation and recognition of professional expertise
10. Opportunities to showcase exemplary local programs

*The unique responsibilities of teachers of English are outlined in Essentials of English: A Document for Reflection and Dialogue published by the National Council of Teachers of English in October, 1982.

> The study of English offers varied opportunities for the individual to mature intellectually and emotionally. We believe in basic competency in English as a means by which the individual can acquire self-sufficiency and work independently in all disciplines. We believe further in challenges to both the analytical and creative capabilities of our students.
>
> Toward accomplishing these aims, we as teachers of English hold ourselves responsible for
>
> *helping all students become literate and capable of functioning in an increasingly complex society
>
> *directing them to read and view materials appropriate to their abilities and interests
>
> *encouraging them to exchange ideas, listen perceptively, and discuss vigorously
>
> *urging them to write honestly in the spirit of open inquiry
>
> *helping them expand their interests and reach their fullest potential through language
>
> By contributing in these ways, we hope to expand the capacities of the human intellect and to preserve the tradition of free thought in a democratic society

A New Contributor

Are You Still Writing, Rick?

Richard W. Bates

Are you still writing, Rick?

Fifteen years ago, half a teaching career ago it was, that I taught your class—the lowest, the slowest, and the dumbest ninth grade class. Supposedly. Your group was the dregs—16- and 17-year-old freshman wastes. So they told me. No teacher chose your group, you were *assigned*. And that year my number came up. It was rough at first, remember? I had to jerk a few of you out in the hall and bust buns just to get your attention. Word went out fast that the skinny English teacher could smoke denim.

We got to business after that. Conjugating verbs, comparing adjectives, and diagramming sentences. Literature? Remember *Romeo and Juliet?* We struggled with it for a single period, and the next day I brought in 25 copies of *West Side Story*. And we went to town. It opened up our class. You introduced me to your world, and I listened. I told you of mine, and you listened. We explored loyalty, trust, honor, pain, love, death, and war. We were all outcasts making our way in a violent and alien world. We talked about it and we wrote about it. Sentences, paragraphs, stories, essays. No one could believe the pieces you guys wrote.

And poetry. Remember poetry, Rick? The one form we hadn't tried all year. It was spring, a time for new beginnings. We gave it a shot. You really found your medium. Your words leaped off the page, your images illuminated the room, your phrasings held such tension as wound springs. You were having difficulty with diction, and the thesaurus was too cumbersome a tool. I loaned you my copy of *The Springhill Mine Disaster*. You loved it. You left my room nearly bumping the door jamb, your gaze riveted on the book.

"Mr. Bates, would you come to the office before you leave this evening," read the note in my mailbox. I entered unaware, unknowing, and unprepared. There is no preparation for an inquisition. Both the principal and superintendent blasted me with a barrage of heated and angry accusations about the obscene and subversive books I was teaching my students. What right did I have to do this? Why was I undermining their school, flouting taste, good judgment and moral values? Such a degenerate could not be tolerated on the staff. I was fired.

As I was later able to reconstruct, Rick had become so engrossed in the book that he had read it through his history class. The teacher, incensed that a student was absorbed in something other than the Wall Street Crash of '29, took the book from him, read it, demanded to know where Rick had gotten such trash, and passed the book to the principal. Explaining to the two administrators in a second meeting at my request that the content of the poems was not the issue, that a student needed models for his own expression in words that he was already using on subjects that he himself was already writing about, and that a 17-year-old freshman from a home broken, and twice retained, was not being corrupted, or his mind warped, or his innocence stained. Appeals to the department chair and to the board of education held no hope. I groped my way through the last five weeks of school in a fog of disbelief.

Are you still writing, Rick?

So am I, again.

Richard W. Bates is principal of New Carlisle Middle School, Ohio.

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THANKS FOR WRITING, RICHARD

Licking County Office of Education
20 South Second Street
Newark, Ohio 43055

October 3, 1986

Richard W. Bates
Worthington City Schools
752 High St.
Worthington, Ohio 43085

Dear Richard W. Bates:

I'm so pleased to see an article in the September 1986 English Journal written by an Ohio administrator. And though the incidents that you recount are now long past, your description made them live again and caused my heart to thump in apprehension and sympathy.

Someone along the way has recognized your strengths for you're still at work in public education. I give thanks and hope you'll show your article including its drafts and revisions with the students in your High School.

Congratulations for having been published and thanks for providing teachers and administrators with a positive role model both as a person and a writer.

Sincerely,

Judith W. Keck

Judith W. Keck
Immediate Past President
for the Ohio Council of
Teachers of English
Language Arts

9. Encourage the child to send for information, by writing for:
    a. free samples
    b. travel brochures
    c. catalogs

10. Get the child involved in writing:
    a. helping with grocery lists
    b. adding notes at the end of parents' letters
    c. sending holiday/birthday cards
    d. taking down phone messages
    e. writing notes to friends
    f. helping plan trips by writing for information
    g. drafting notes to school for parental signature
    h. preparing invitations to family get-togethers

Writing for real purposes is rewarding. Your child may take some coaxing, but it will be well worth your patient effort.

This pamphlet is provided by the Language Arts Curriculum Development Committee of the Newark City Schools, East Main & South First Street, Newark, Ohio 43055

HOW
TO HELP YOUR CHILD
BECOME
A BETTER WRITER

-Suggestions for Parents-

An exciting new program is planned to help children learn how to write.

The best means for assuring that children and youth become skillful writers is for parents and teachers to work together.

Writing skill develops slowly. Nonetheless, with your help and encouragement, your children will certainly progress.

Suggestions listed will help your child become a better writer. Take an interest in your child's writing at school and at home.

More suggestions and information about the school's writing program will be sent to you next fall.

1. The basis of good writing is good talk. Go places; see things with your child. Talk about what has been seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched.

2. Let children see you write often:
   - a. notes to friends
   - b. letters to business firms
   - c. stories to share with children

   Read aloud what you have written and ask the children their opinion of what you've read. Let them see you make changes. Making changes in what you write confirms for the child that revision is a natural part of writing, which it is.

3. Rejoice in effort. Delight in ideas. Resist the temptation to be critical. Your most effective role is helper, not critic. When they ask for help with spelling, punctuation, and usage, supply that help!

4. Provide a suitable place for children to write --
   - a. a quiet corner
   - b. any flat surface with elbow room
   - c. a comfortable chair
   - d. a good light

5. Give gifts associated with writing --
   - a. several kinds of pens
   - b. pencils
   - c. a desk lamp
   - d. paper, stationery/envelopes, stamps
   - e. booklet for private diary/daily journal
   - f. dictionary appropriate to child's age and needs
   - g. thesaurus for older children
   - h. typewriter, even a battered portable
   - i. erasers and "white out" liquid

6. Encourage (do not demand) frequent writing. Frequency of writing is important to develop the habit of writing

7. Praise the child's efforts at writing. Emphasize the child's successes. For every error the child makes, there are dozens of things she/he has done well.

8. Share letters from friends and relatives. Treat them as special events. Urge relatives and friends to write notes to the child, no matter how brief.

WORKING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

by
Dawn Holt Anderson

At this point, the curriculum is based on the best that is known about teaching the language arts, but classroom practice may not yet have changed. And for good reason! Teachers are professionals who have been doing a goo job and meeting with success throughout their careers. No professional woul make sweeping changes without being convinced that there is good reason t change.

It is possible to provide that good reason. A curriculum committee must have frequent contact with teachers; send communiques, newsletters, questionaires, surveys. When we polled teachers about what areas in language arts needed immediate attention, spelling won, hands down. Elementary teachers almost unanimously expressed frustration with the spellin program--or lack of one--at that time.

As curriculum committee members read research on spelling, teachers were interested to read summaries and notes about what we were finding, since we were working in clear response to their stated concerns.

When time came for adoption of a spelling text, the Language Arts Committee reviewed the texts available. (see "The Story of How Research Can Affect Curriculuim Decisions.")

The text evaluation form is an important document in locating a text or series that will provide content and student activities consistent with the curriculum that has been carefully developed. (see textbook Evaluation Form,) The questions on the evaluation form must reflect the central issues in your curriculum: for example, if the writing process is required in your curriculum, the evaluation form might ask, "Do the lessons and assignments include all steps of the writing process?"

An additional way to see that the research-based curriculum is implemented in classrooms is to involve teachers in a writing project. These projects, modelled after the Bay Area Writing Project, involve participants in writing for part of each day, and discussing the research on writing for the remaining time. Participation in a writing project almost guarantees a change in classroom approach since the teachers have become writers and know what they are asking of their students.

But writing projects, like other inservice programs, cost money. And teachers rarely have access to information about funding sources. Funding is available through, for example, State Department grants, and teachers at the local level can learn about these funds by keeping alert. Applications for such grants are usually sent to the superintendent's office. Classroom teachers are rarely made aware of their existence. But sources of information about available funds are:

- professional organizations such as Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (OCTELA);

- State Department of Education personnel; in Ohio, Linda Fenner is the Language Arts Consultant to schools;

and - newspaper articles about state and federal dollars for education.

Once interested teachers learn that funds may be available they can call the funding source for information about deadlines and about who will have received the application. Next, they can check with the appropriate person, usually the superintendent or director of curriculum, to see if the grant proposal has already been developed. Then offer to help by writing the grant. Ask for a copy of the guidelines and proposal form.

Even if the proposal is not accepted in total, some of the requests are likely to be included. And, more likely, the administrator will be glad to know what teachers want and will endorse the proposal as submitted. (see page from Grant Proposal)

As the plans for inservice are made, try to involve administrators in inservices or projects that may, when implemented, result in changes in classroom practice. The more educators see good reason for change, the more likely it is that implementation of new programs will occur throughout the system.

THE STORY OF HOW RESEARCH CAN AFFECT CURRICULUM DECISIONS

by
Dawn Anderson and Karolyn Burkett

A major problem in teaching today is that results of research are not readily available to teachers. Thus we continue to write programs, use methods and approach teaching without the benefit of proven knowledge in our field. When it became evident that we needed a new spelling program in the Newark Public Schools, our Language Arts Curriculum Development Committee decided to begin with a study of current research on spelling, rather than looking at available programs or texts. We think the results were worth the effort.

Over the summer the committee chair assembled a bibliography and some of the books and articles containing the research. Each committee member read several books and articles and listed specific research findings on spelling.

Each member reported findings to the entire committee. Much of what we learned was going to require major changes in our ways. Based on these finding the committee formulated a philosophy and rationale for the teaching of spellin K-12. Next we ordered from publishers copies of the research and our research-based philosophy.

The committee intended to select at least three spelling series to present to the entire elementary and language arts staff for consideration. The series adoption would be based on their evaluations. However, the committee found only one series which they felt reflective of the research. Interestingly enough that series was developed not by a publishing company, but by teachers in a school district. It was that series along with the research that the committee needed to present to the staff in a way that would convince them to adopt this research-based program.

A memo was prepared and sent to all elementary teachers and all secondary language arts teachers in preparation for a day of inservice. The memo presents 1) ten common practices not helpful in the teaching of spelling, 2) a district philosophy for the teaching of spelling, 3) a rationale which lists ten key research findings, 4) a bibliography of spelling research.

At the inservice enough texts were available for each teacher to examine copies for all grade levels. After a brief explanation of the program, committee members moved about, answering questions and explaining methods and rationale. On their evaluations forms, the teachers approved the recommended series and again and again expressed thanks and appreciation for the committee's efforts to find and bring the research to their attention.

GRANT PROPOSAL

3. PROGRAM SUMMARY

Please provide a summary of anticipated activities in the pursuit of educational excellence in one or more of the academic area(s) of English, mathematics and science. If you wish to integrate the three areas, please so indicate.

English:

The following activities will be provided in pursuit of excellence in English composition.

1. The Language Arts Curriculum Development Committee will develop pupil performance objectives for English Composition, grades K-12.
2. A subcommittee of the Language Arts Curriculum Development Committee will integrate the developed pupil performance objectives with the current curriculum guide and the adopted language arts text.
3. A three-week Newark Writing Project Workshop will be offered to teachers and administrators. The purpose of the workshop will be to introduce the writing process and research on writing. Effort will be made to have one teacher fro each of the seventeen buildings in the district participate as well as administrators from the elementary, junior high and senior high levels. The worksh will attempt to equip participants to serve as consultants on the writing process throughout the school district.

The printing of pupil performance objectives and the integrated language arts curriculum guide will serve as in indication of completion of the first two tasks identified. The third task will be evaluated by a tool developed to assess both the process and t product of the Newark Writing Project Workshop.

The identified purposes represent the first steps of a four year sequence in the deve ment of a K-12 writing program which will bring research-based teaching strategies to all Newark students as part of competency-based education in English Composition. A four year timeline with projected expenditures and district participants is provided below.

DATE	LANGUAGE ARTS CDC	SUBCOMMITTEE - 5 People	ELEMENTARY TEACHERS + SECONDARY LANGUAGE ARTS	COST
1983-84 April (released time)	Develop PPO's in composition	Write curriculum guides and integrate with PPO's and Glencoe		15 subs X 3 days = 45 X 36 = $1,620 5 sub.co. X 2 Sat. @ $36 = $360 $1,980 C.Guides $1,000
June 3 weeks - 5 hrs. per day			Newark Writing Project Workshop 1 teacher per building + 3 administrators = 20 X 100 2 teachers X $750 Outside speakers Materials	 $2,000 1,500 500 500 $4,500
			FISCAL '84 TOTAL	$7,480

DATE	LANGUAGE ARTS CDC	SUBCOMMITTEE - 5 People	ELEMENTARY TEACHERS + SECONDARY LANGUAGE ARTS	COST
1984-85 September 1 full day per teacher per grade level (released time)			Inservice Workshop on the Writing Process and Curriculum Guides (9 Workshops) (Run by CDC and State Department)	240 subs @ $40 = $9,600 Materials $200
October	2 days - CDC Chair Released time to Columbus to study assessment techniques			2 days sub $40 = $80 Travel $20 $100
February Inservice			Jim Simms - Writing Across The Curriculum	Materials $400 Personnel $500 $900
March 2 days (released time)	Develop Competency Tests and Assessment Process			15 subs X 2 days 30 X $40 = $1,200
April (released time)		Administer tests selectively and establish reliability and validity		5 subs X 2 days X 40 = $400
June 5 days		Develop intervention strategies, including Glencoe		5 X 5 days @ $40 = $1,000
			FISCAL '85	$13,400
1985-86 August - 2 days before school			65 teachers (5 per grade level) - Develop grade level intervention strategies for curriculum guides	65 @ $40 =$5,200 (2 days)
September and October			Introduce assessment and intervention strategies at building level (TV?) - using CDC	
October - March	Update course of study and prepare for school-wide testing			
January/ February Inservice			Optional workshops (half-day) for writing individual intervention strategies for curriculum guides	
1986-87	Administer first school wide tests Implement school wide interventions Evaluate testing program			

SETTING UP SUPPORT GROUPS

by
Dawn Holt Anderson

Teaching has traditionally been an isolated activity. Teachers have closely guarded their secrets of excellence behind closed classroom doors. Yet we know the value, the joy, of sharing our successes with other professionals. And when we want to try new methods, we need support and encouragement to face the frustrations that arise. Setting up groups of people who share concerns is not new--from tribal rites to Weight Watchers clubs, people have benefited from meeting to build confidence in themselves and trust in others.

Some potentially supportive groups are already in place. The high school English department and the curriculum committee can both function as support groups if they are set up to do so. Try opening with a ten minute free writing on the topic to be discussed that day, or on a topic that affects all: "The best teaching I did today was. . .," or "Concerns about the writing process in my classroom." Then share the writing with a partner or with the whole group.

Another source of support can come from teachers in writing projects. Participants usually are teachers at all levels, K-12, who learn and work together. After one high school teacher presented her paper at a three week writing project, a third grade teacher from her school district exclaimed in surprise, "It's so nice to see high school teachers who care!" The understanding gained in these groups gives teachers a new respect for each other as professionals. Follow up meetings after writing projects can be another support mechanism. Announce meeting dates, three or four a year, and invite all past and present workshop participants. The meeting time can be used to refresh writing skills and to share lessons and ideas.

Other invitational meetings can provide new sources of support. Contact a teacher at each junior and senior high building. Invite junior and senior high English teachers to one meeting per building during the year; if three buildings, three meetings. Ask the principal to host the meeting and provide refreshments; a teacher from the building can chair the meeting. The agenda can be formed at each meeting, or generated at the first meeting for the rest of the year. Opening lines of communication across secondary levels can smooth the transition for students and help assure that the curriculum is being implemented in each school with some equity.

Elementary teachers, too, can be invited to grade or level meetings. Especially when they feel the demands of writing samples and compentency tests, teachers are eager to meet to share concerns and gain assurance from those who have tried it before or who have developed the prompts and scoring devices for the tests.

One more source of support can come from teachers in other content areas. Talk to the building principal. Offer to provide a Writing Across the Curriculum Workshop during staff meetings. (see Slate Starter Sheet: "Writing to Learn in All Subjects."[1]) At these meetings, provide teachers with topics for writing assignments and even with ideas for entire lesson plans. You will gain support from many colleagues when you convince them that their students must not only learn to write, but must write to learn the content which teachers in all areas are trying so hard to teach.

Administrators can be supportive of the professionals whom they supervise. Build their trust by sharing with them the plans and information you have. After each conference or workshop, especially if you have been granted professional leave to attend, type a summary of the key issues covered and send a copy to each administrator in the district, to each teacher who may be interested in the information, and to board members. Let other educators know what is going on. When your report is especially vital, containing ideas that may eventually cause major changes in curriculum and practice, ask for a meeting with the superintendent and curriculum director to go over the issues in your report.[2] Become the person who keeps your school's leadership informed of the latest developments in your professional. Mutual respect and trust should ensue.

Other ways to build support among teachers are to:

- nominate outstanding teachers for awards such as The OCTELA Teacher Award (see nomination form) or your school's Teacher of the Year award;
- offer prizes, through the curriculum or building funds, for outstanding lesson plans that integrate the language arts or teach writing or reading in content areas.
- provide summer pay for summer work by curriculum committee members. Convince administrators to find the money, and include such pay in any grants proposed by the language arts committee.

Working together as professionals, teachers can provide each other a sense of confidence and dignity in knowing what we know and doing what we do, the challenging and vital work of educating the young.

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1. NEA offers a workshop kit on Writing Across the Curriculum. It was developed by Stephen Tchudi, former President of National Council of Teachers of English.

2. The "Reasearch of Writing Process" document included in this issue, was presented by the teachers who compiled it to their school's superintendent and assistant superintendent before it was circulated elsewhere in the system.

April 1984

STARTER SHEET

SLATE Support for the Learning and Teaching of English

WRITING TO LEARN IN ALL SUBJECTS

Schools and colleges across the country are now beginning to develop school-wide writing programs in which students in all subjects at all grade levels engage in writing as a natural part of learning and thinking. The purposes of such programs are three-fold:

- to improve writing;
- to enhance learning in content;
- to develop thinking skills.

To Improve Writing

The new writing programs have been spurred in large part by incessant efforts over the past two decades to document the need to improve student writing: e.g., the 17-year drop in verbal scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, from 478 (out of a possible 800) in 1963 to 424 in 1980; the dire reports (1969-79) of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that up to 30% of students aged 9, 13, and 17 have "extremely serious" problems with writing; the 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (*A Nation at Risk*), which, among its recommendations for improving the content of high school education, placed highest priority on development of the ability to use language; the 1983 report by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (*High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*, Harper & Row) which named English as "the first and most essential goal of education" for *all* students and which called writing "the most neglected formal skill in education."

It stands to reason that if students are to learn to write, they need practice. And yet, after extensive research, Arthur N. Applebee reported in *Writing in the Secondary School* (NCTE, 1981) that short-answer and fill-in-the-blank exercises, along with note-taking, comprise most of the writing done by high school students in all subjects. On the average, only three percent of homework assignments or class time is devoted to the writing of a paragraph or longer.

English teachers, of course, bear primary responsibility for *teaching* writing, including skills such as invention, focus, organization, revision, proofreading, and control of syntax, diction, usage, and mechanics. But other teachers throughout the school could frequently assign tasks in which students *use* writing to learn content and clarify thoughts. English teachers can not do the job alone—for at least two reasons:

- Skills learned in English class and never used beyond will quickly atrophy.
- If no one except the English teacher expects good writing, students get a clear message that writing is not important (and commonly resist work on writing even in English class).

On the other hand, when teachers throughout the school regularly assign writing to reinforce content, writing becomes a natural part of learning for students. With increased practice in using writing to solve real learning problems, students can experience the happy by-product of increased writing skill.

For reasons such as these, NCTE affirmed in a 1983 resolution "the position that students should write frequently in every course as a way of learning the subject matter and of sharpening their writing skills." Therefore, NCTE is now seeking ways "to provide assistance to teachers of other subject matter disciplines in their efforts to improve students' writing skills in all subject matter fields."

To Enhance Learning of Content

In emphasizing the *process* of writing (prewriting, writing, revising), researchers and teachers note many ways in which writing strengthens learning. Prewriting activities, as well as various kinds of informal writing, have been found especially useful for learning. In lists, notes, learning log entries, informal sketches written to focus thought in class—the student writes freely to probe ideas, ask questions, draw connections. The purpose is not to form carefully edited prose meant to communicate to someone else, but rather to write to oneself, to "think aloud on paper," as James Britton put it.

Researching the writing of British school children in the 1960s, Britton contrasted functions of three types of writing: *transactional*—writing to inform or persuade others as in reports, proposals, essay tests; *poetic*—writing to create artistic

Share These Materials

SLATE *Starter Sheets* are offered as resources for dealing with current issues affecting the teaching of English language arts. SLATE contributors, NCTE members, affiliate leaders and others who receive such materials are invited to reproduce these materials for wider distribution (to administrators, school boards, colleagues in other disciplines, journalists, etc.) to help promote better understanding of the goals of English teaching.

NCTE

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

effect; *expressive*—writing to figure things out. Expressive writing, teachers in all subjects are discovering, can be an efficient tool for thinking about content—one which, importantly, creates little or no paper load for the teacher. Expressive writing in its myriad forms can be found at the heart of most writing-across-the-curriculum programs across the United States. Following is a sampling of sources detailing practical applications of expressive writing to promote learning in various subjects:

Ann E. Berthoff, *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers*, Boynton/Cook, 1981.

Toby Fulwiler, "The Personal Connection: Journal Writing across the Curriculum," in *Language Connections*, ed. Fulwiler and Art Young, NCTE, 1982.

John S. Mayher, Nancy B. Lester, and Gordon M. Pradl, "Writing to Learn across the Curriculum," Ch. 5 in *Learn to Write/Writing to Learn*, Boynton/Cook, 1983.

James Moffett, *Active Voice: A Writing Program across the Curriculum*, Boynton/Cook, 1981.

Judy Salem, "Using Writing in Teaching Mathematics," in *What's Going On? Language Learning Episodes in British and American Classrooms, Grades 4–13*, ed. Mary Barr, Pat D'Arcy, and Mary K. Healy, Boynton/Cook, 1982.

Anne Miller Wotring and Robert Tierney, *Two Studies of Writing in High School Science*, Classroom Research Study No. 5, Bay Area Writing Project, School of Education, University of California—Berkeley, 1981.

The processes of writing and revising more formal essays and reports have also been found to reinforce learning of content. When students write about content, organizing it for themselves, they understand it better and remember it longer. For this reason, Janet Emig contends, "Writing represents a unique mode of learning" ("Writing as a Mode of Learning," *College Composition and Communication*, May 1977, pp. 122-28). In emphasizing the "heuristic value of composing," Angela Dorenkamp writes, "it is the search for language, the struggle to name, which often leads to discovery of new ideas, new relationships, new patterns" (quoted in *Pennsylvania Writing Project Newsletter*, Fall 1983). The critiquing and revising of drafts also provides a fertile time for learning: students reconsider content as they evaluate the accuracy of data and clarity of ideas in one another's writing. When students write and revise, they gain control of the content and make it their own.

To Develop Thinking Skills

Perhaps NAEP's most significant discovery in the 1970s was that the deterioration in writing skills of youth manifested itself *not* primarily in increased numbers of mechanical errors such as misspellings or awkward sentences, but rather in an alarming decline in the ability of writers to think well—to analyze major and minor points, to compare and contrast, to draw inferences, to evaluate data. Experts who reviewed student writing collected by NAEP recommended that teachers in all disciplines be trained to use writing to teach problem-solving and critical thinking (*Reading, Thinking, and Writing: Results from the 1979–80 Assessment of Reading and Literature*, NAEP, 1860 Lincoln St., Denver, Colo. 80295).

The particular power of writing to teach thinking has been underscored by many educators. In researching the difficulties that adolescents have in moving from description of concrete experience to analysis of abstract ideas, Janice Hays cites Jean Piaget's suggestion that the move is "by no means automatic." Although certain levels of cognitive maturity are prerequisite, analytic reasoning will not develop unless learners "interact with an environment that demands such reasoning" ("The Development of Discursive Maturity in College Writers," in *The Writer's Mind: Writing as a Mode of Thinking*, ed. Janice Hays, et al., NCTE, 1983). Writing assignments which challenge students to think can provide a most efficient environment for developing latent reasoning ability. This point is stressed in the 1983 Carnegie reports on high school education: "Clear writing leads to clear thinking. Clear thinking is the basis of clear writing. Perhaps more than any other form of communication, writing holds us responsible for our words and ultimately makes us more thoughtful human beings."

For reasons explained above, writing workshops for teachers in all subjects are now emphasizing the careful design of writing assignments—so that instructions for clearly defined thinking processes are central in writing tasks. Through such emphasis the workshops are also focusing on elements of instruction called for in *Essentials of English*, a statement endorsed by NCTE in 1982 which affirms the importance of teaching creative, logical, and critical thinking skills:

> The ability to analyze, classify, compare, formulate hypotheses, make inferences, and draw conclusions is essential to the reasoning processes of all adults. The capacity to solve problems, both rationally and intuitively, is a way to help students cope successfully with the experience of learning within the school setting and outside.

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING A DISTRICT-WIDE PROGRAM OF WRITING IN ALL SUBJECTS

The American Association of School Administrators, in a 1982 "critical issues report" on *Teaching Writing: Problems and Solutions*, outlined ingredients of successful writing programs:

- Cooperative effort from all elements of the school community, including administrators, teachers, school board, parents. Although administrators must provide leadership in written policy statements and commitments of money and staff, the development of the program itself must be done by teachers. As one superintendent put it, "A writing program cannot be one that comes down from on high. There must be commitment in the ranks." Parents and school board members must be informed of the purposes behind changing methods in the teaching of writing.
- Evaluation of the current situation through assessment of student writing throughout the district.
- Development of a consistent, sequential writing program in all subjects, K-12, based on current research and effective practices.
- A realization that it takes *time* to build a writing program. School districts must be prepared for a "three- to five-year venture," according to Paul Eschholz, director of the Vermont Writing Program.
- Effective inservice training and follow-up. Administrators have found it more effective not to force all teachers to attend the inservice training, but rather to begin with volunteers, whose enthusiasm and success in improving student writing will convince other teachers to participate

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS WISHING TO INCORPORATE WRITING INTO THE STUDY OF VARIOUS SUBJECTS

The following kinds of suggestions to teachers have been developed in inservice workshops on writing across the curriculum (WAC).

1. Begin by listing the main components of content, as well as the kinds of thinking, you want your students to learn. Then from the many different kinds of writing (brief reports, long research papers, short analyses, journals, learning logs, essay tests, letters, five minutes of freewriting on a half sheet of paper, etc.), choose a form that will help your students master the central concepts in your class.

   Example: A fifth grade social studies teacher wanted the class to learn what life was like in the Jamestown colony. She asked each student to select one Jamestown citizen (e.g., a farmer, a glass blower, Pocahontas) and, after researching the topic in the library, to role-play by writing daily entries in the journal of the chosen person. (Thinking skills: knowledge of facts, analysis of pertinent information from library reading, understanding of another culture through imaginative identification with one of its inhabitants, synthesis in creating the journal entries.)

   Example: A high school chemistry teacher wanted his students not only to memorize but also to comprehend. Each Monday he gave his class a short list of concepts (e.g., covalent bond, oxidation, radioactivity) that they were to prepare to explain in writing during class on Friday. Students were encouraged to study together, to make notes, and to bring the notes for use on Friday, when *one* of the topics would be drawn for a 10-minute in-class writing. The writing task asked students (working sometimes individually and sometimes in pairs or small groups) to define the term, and to give and *explain* an example.

   Example: In a first aid unit in a health class, the teacher knew that his students needed to practice quick thinking and problem solving in emergencies. On several occasions in class he provided a dittoed paragraph describing an emergency. (The child, lying near an open bottle of aspirin, is vomiting. . . . What would you do?) Students wrote rapidly and then, after small- and large-group discussion, evaluated their responses.

   Example: An economics professor wanted the students in her seminar to learn to apply theory when evaluating solutions to economic problems. She assigned a semester-long research paper, asking students to evaluate the economic policies being used to solve problems in a developing Third World country. She divided the project into parts (due at three- and four-week intervals) with writers receiving peer and/or instructor feedback at each stage of the writing project: project proposal, bibliography, draft, final paper. In exchanging ideas with others at each stage of the process, students had ample opportunity to think and rethink about the topic.

2. Design the writing assignment carefully, so that (a) it will, in fact, help students learn, and (b) students will understand clearly what they are expected to do.

   Use a verb which specifies the thinking process at the center of the writing task (e.g., *list, compare, summarize, evaluate*). Be sure the students understand what the verb is asking them to do.

   Clarify the writer's purpose and the audience for this writing.

   Specify the criteria (three or four most important traits) by which you will evaluate the writing. Evaluation—by the writer, by peers responding to a draft, by the teacher marking the final paper—will proceed more efficiently at all stages of the writing if criteria have been listed clearly in the assignment.

   At the time the assignment is given, provide samples of good and weak student papers received from similar assignments in the past.

3. Consider how to help students at various stages of the writing process—prewriting, writing, peer critiquing, revising, editing, and proofreading. (Sources are selected to represent the kinds of material available to help teachers. No attempt has been made, here or elsewhere in this report, to provide a complete bibliography.)

   Linda Flower, *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981 (a textbook).

   Donald Graves, *Writing: Teachers & Children at Work*, Heineman, 1983 (especially for the elementary level).

   Donald Murray, *A Writer Teaches Writing*, Houghton Mifflin, 1968; *Write to Learn*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984 (a textbook).

   Barbara E. Fassler Walvoord, *Helping Students Write Well*, Modern Language Association of America, 1982.

4. In responding to writing, develop methods that encourage students and yet communicate clearly to them about strengths and weaknesses in the writing.

   Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell, *Evaluating Writing*, NCTE, 1977.

   Dan Kirby and Tom Liner, Ch. 14, "Grading and Evaluating," in *Inside Out: Developmental Strategies for Teaching Writing*, Boynton/Cook, 1981.

   Peter Schiff, "Responding to Writing: Peer Critiques, Teacher-Student Conferences, and Essay Evaluation," in *Language Connections: Writing and Reading across the Curriculum*, ed. Toby Fulwiler and Art Young, NCTE, 1982.

5. Develop efficient methods for handling the paper load.

   In journals and other kinds of expressive writing, little or no teacher time is required for marking.

   Breaking a long writing project into parts, and providing students help during each part, improves the quality of final papers and thus reduces marking time.

   Students can be taught to help one another during the drafting and revising stages of writing. Peer critiquing has been found most effective in (a) transferring responsibility for good writing from the teacher to the *students*, (b) in promoting students' review of content as papers are discussed, and (c) in greatly reducing the time teachers spend in commenting on papers.

   (elementary) Marion Crowhurst, "The Writing Workshop: An Experiment in Peer Response to Writing," *Language Arts*, October 1979, pp. 757-762.

   (elementary) Connie Russell, "Putting Research into Practice: Conferencing with Young Writers," *Language Arts*, March 1983, pp. 333-340.

   (secondary) Mary K. Healy, *Using Student Writing Response Groups in the Classroom*. Bay Area Writing Project, University of California-Berkeley, 1980.

   (college) Wilma Clark, et al., "Use of Peer [illegible]

Improve Student Writing," (in English, psychology, economics, and secondary education), *Wisconsin Dialogue*, Spring 1983 (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, Wis. 54701).

SELECTED SOURCES NOT MENTIONED IN THE TEXT ABOVE

James Britton, et al., *The Development of Writing Abilities*, Schools Council Research Studies, London, 1975; rpt. NCTE, 1977.

Nancy Martin, et al., *Writing and Learning across the Curriculum 11-16*, Schools Council Project, University of London Institute of Education, 1976.

Patricia Stock, ed., *fforum: Essays on Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Writing*, Boynton/Cook, 1983. (A collection of *fforum* essays published at the University of Michigan by the English Composition Board which has developed WAC programs at the university and in schools throughout Michigan. For information call Fran Zoren, Coordinator of Writing, 313-764-0429.)

Stephen N. Tchudi and Susan J. Tchudi, *Teaching Writing in the Content Areas: Elementary School*, NEA/NCTE, 1983.

Stephen N. Tchudi and Margie C. Huerta, *Teaching Writing in the Content Areas: Middle School/Junior High*, NEA/NCTE, 1983.

Stephen N. Tchudi and Joanne Yates, *Teaching Writing in the Content Areas: Senior High School*, NEA/NCTE, 1983.

Robert Weiss, "Writing in the Total Curriculum: A Program for Cross-Disciplinary Cooperation," in *Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition*, ed. Timothy R. Donovan and Ben W. McClelland, NCTE, 1980.

NATIONAL WAC NETWORKS

Information regarding WAC leaders in all parts of the country is available from the following:

James Gray, founder of the Bay Area Writing Project and coordinator of the National Writing Project, comprised of more than 90 sites throughout the United States. Tolman Hall, School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, Calif. 94270. (Phone: 415-642-0963).

Elaine Maimon, national leader in developing writing across the curriculum. Beaver College, Glenside, Pa. 19038. (Phone: 215-572-2964).

Chris Thaiss, editor of the *Network of Writing-across-the-Curriculum Programs* directory, Northern Virginia Writing Project, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, Va. 22030.

Wilma Clark
(for the NCTE/SLATE Steering Committee)

OCTELA

AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS EDUCATORS

OVERVIEW

The "Award for Outstanding English Language Arts Educators" recognizes excellence in teaching English and the language arts in Ohio's schools. Each year at its annual conference the Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts may confer awards on one or two teachers judged by the Outstanding Teacher Award Committee to be exemplary in their teaching and their professional leadership.

QUALIFICATIONS

A candidate for an Outstanding Teacher Award must:

a. Be a full-time teacher whose current assignment includes the teaching of English language arts in grades one through twelve of a public or private school in Ohio.
b. Have a strong record of classroom teaching, curriculum development, and leadership within his or her school.
c. Have a strong record of professional activity and achievement beyond his or her school.
d. Have the articulateness, wit, and composure to represent the English language arts well in interviews and public appearances.

These general qualifications must be addressed in each candidate's Application, and in supporting letters from the applicant's building principal, at least one teacher well-acquainted with the candidate's accomplishments, and at least one former student or the parent of a present or former student.

SELECTION PROCESS

An Award Committee will be named by the President, after consultation with the President Elect, Past President, and Advisor. Except for the Chairperson, the names of Committee members will not be announced until the award ceremony.

Requests for application forms should be sent to the Chairperson of the Award Committee by October 1. Application materials will be mailed with a return deadline of December 1, so that the Committee can review applications and schedule interviews with finalists. The Committee will determine the winner or winners by February 15 (if it decides to make an award). At an appropriate time during the Spring Conference, the award or awards will be presented by the President and the Award Committee Chairperson.

Basing its judgments on the quality of nominees in any given year, the Award Committee may confer one or two "Outstanding English Language Arts Educator" awards. When two awards are given, one should recognize a teacher with an elementary grades teaching assignment, and one should recognize a teacher with a high school, junior high school, or middle school assignment.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Applications must be presented in a well-organized loose-leaf notebook including the following sections (appropriately separated and labeled for the ease of readers):

1. Application Cover Sheet. This must appear as page one in the notebook.

2. Educational Background (Optional). This section might outline formal educational experiences that do not appear neatly on the transcripts of major degrees: CUE workshops, scattered graduate courses at various institutions, non-credit in-service workshops, etc. Transcripts, copies of certificates, letters from workshop leaders, etc. might be included.

2. Representative Teaching Duties. This section should provide a clear sense of your present school and students, as well as your teaching responsibilities and the way you carry them out. If appropriate, the section also should outline earlier teaching experiences at other schools.

3. Professional Activities in the English Language Arts. This section should illustrate your professional "connection" (through memberships, conference attendance, offices held, journals read, etc.) to NCTE, OCTELA, other Ohio affiliates of NCTE, NCTE affiliates in other states, other NCTE related organizations, other organizations in the language arts, other educational organizations.

4. Writing Activities as an English Language Arts Professional. This section should give a clear impression of how you use writing in your professional life, for instance with teaching materials, grant proposals, curriculum development projects, conference papers, publications, etc. Include a sample of writing you performed as a language arts professional.

5. Civic, Philanthropic, Church, and Political Activities. This section should indicate the nature and extent of your involvement with community concerns and activities beyond those of education and the schools.

6. Position Paper. An essay of up to three double-spaced typed pages exploring what you take to be the central issues facing teachers of the English language arts.

7. Self Appraisal. An essay of up to three double-spaced typed pages exploring your strengths as a teacher of the English language arts.

8. Reference Letters. Include original signed letters from at least the following individuals: the principal of your school; an English language arts teacher in your building; a teacher or other education professional (not necessarily in your building or community); a former student or a parent of a present or former student.

A REPORT
on the
N.C.T.E. CONFERENCE
DENVER, 1983

To: Colleagues
From: Karolyn Burkett and Dawn Holt Anderson
Date: November 22, 1983

REPORT OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: Friday, Nov. 18, 1983 2:00pm

1. Director's Report:
    a. 40,000 individual memberships
    b. Notes +: 8,000 members
    c. Task force on excellence - Toward Excellence in English- has been created to influence commisions which report on education.
2. Distinguinshed Service Award presented to Imogene Springer, curriculum consultant for the Denver schools.
3. Doublespeak Award went to Ronald Reagan because he railed against governments which seek to destabilize other governments. He gave this speech to the Costa Rican National Assembly on the eve of the admission that the CIA had been involved with just such activities in Nicauragua;
and for calling the MX Missile The Peacekeeper;
and for saying that a vote against the MX was a vote against arms control.
This award has been given since 1974 for dishonest use of language that has a pernicious social effect.
4. The Orwell award is given annually to a work that promotes honesty and clarity in public language. This year's winner is Haig Bosmagian (Sp?) for The Language of Oppression.
5. The Board passed a resolution to send all resolutions passed at the annual meeting, along with pro and con arguments, to the membership for ratification.

REPORT ON THE SECONDARY SESSION: Fri. Nov. 18, 1983 5:00 pm

This panel about computer use indicated that software available includes:
  a. drills and applications
  b. problem solving applications, such as students write a story, the computer animations act out the story with graphics; or alternative ending stories such as Dragonskeep.

We were given information about ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) and about how to order free information and specific research about computers. See Karolyn or Dawn for that address.

REPORT ON THE AFFILIATE ROUNDTABLE BREAKFAST: Sat. Nov. 19, 1983 8am

Ideas to encourage membership:
  a. Reward administrators for giving professional leave and for encouraging professional memberships: i.e.
      certificate to principals with highest # of members
      letters to school board recognizing same "
      feature administrator in journal or newspaper
      invite to affiliate meetings
  b. Award certificates of merit to students, parents, professionals; ask administrators for recommendations.
  c. Publish membership forms in each publication issue.
  d. Invite respected speakers to conferences (Yolen, Adler)
  e. Feature a teacher in each journal published
  f. Appoint greeting committee to locate and assist those attending meetings or conferences for the first time (especially overnight meet
  g. Give state wide (or local) Distinguished Service Award.

AFFIILIATE ROUNDTABLE (cont'd):

Idea for NOTEBOOK:

publish teachers' most helpful teaching aids (films, records, etc.)

REPORT FROM SECONDARY LUNCHEON: Sat. Nov. 19, 1983 11:30am

Speaker: Lee Hay, 1983 Teacher of the Year. Hay says we have moved from the Industrial Age to the Age of Information; our teaching must reflect this change. The issues of the future for teachers include:

1. Students must be able to access and process information:
    a. we must insure access to computers for rich and poor students alike.
    b. We must prepare students to process visual images because:
        1) everything from the library of congress to daily newspapers to the mail and shopping orders will be computerized, and
        2) the telecommunications industry has set a goal to increase the average viewing time of its audience from 27 hours per week to 40 hours per week.
2. Students must be given more opportunities for being creative:
    a. with the advent of voice activated computers, clearer and more precise ORAL language and diction will be necessary;
    b. teachers must stop talking more than students do in a class period;
    c. art, music and other creative courses must not be eliminated.
3. Teachers must make the community aware of the nature of our work and that computers are an aid to learning, not a teacher replacement:
    a. teachers may need to teach more life skills gecause there may no longer be the teaditional partnership between parents and schools;
4. Teachers must make students aware that the 5 job areas expected to grow in this decade are:
    a. janitor
    b. nurses' aide and orderly
    c. sales clerk
    d. waiters
    e. cashiers.
5. Teachers must be aware that the computer has been outstripped by KIPS, Knowledge Information Processing Systems, which can conclude, draw inferences, make judgments, etc.
    a. Humans can process four non related pieces of information at a time.
    b. KIPS can process 4 billion in a minute.

In the Industrial Age, we allowed ourselves to become physically flabby; Hay hopes that in the Information Age, we will refuse to become intellectually flabby.

REPORT FROM THE SLATE SESSION: Sat. Nov. 19, 1983 5pm

1. Please notify national of any political or legislative concerns locally;
2. Karolyn Burkett has been nominated for the SLATE Steering Committee.

REPORT FROM THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING: Sun. Nov. 20, 1983 8am

1. The following Sense-of-the-House motions were passed (these are advisory in nature, not binding; they may be introduced as resolutions next year):
    a. NCTE should investigate merit pay and how it has worked historically the motion urged NCTE to oppose merit pay.
    b. NCTE staff will write letters to superintendents of teachers who are published in the national journals; this recognition would be at teachers' request.
    c. Bernard O'Donnel, founder and former head of ERIC, memorial tribute.
    d. Smoking should be prohibited in all future sessions and meetings.

ANNUAL MEETING (cont'd.):

2. Declaration:
   a. Yetta Goodman urged Council and Affiliates to increase elementary memberships and asked for a name change to include language arts.

3. The following resolutions were passed:

ON COMPUTERS IN ENGLISH AND LANGUAGE ARTS

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English through its publications and professional meetings explore the effective use of computers in the teaching of English and language arts;

that NCTE urge equity of access to computers among students of varying socio-economic levels and among various departments within a school; and

that NCTE provide leadership in defining legitimate uses of the computer by encouraging research and by disseminating information about computers and the English language arts curriculum.

ON WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English affirm the position that students should write frequently in every course as a way of learning the subject matter and of sharpening their writing skills; and

that NCTE seek ways to provide assistance to teachers of other subject matter disciplines in their efforts to improve students' writing skills in all subject matter fields.

ON THE EFFECT OF WORKLOAD IN ENGLISH CLASSES

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English establish a task force to summarize existing research on the relationship of workload to teaching and learning; and

that this task force propose additional research if needed.

ON THE HUMANE ASPECTS OF ENGLISH AS A DISCIPLINE

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of Tnglish discourage a narrow pedagogy which focuses on specific language skills and remind its many constituencies that, while language proficiency is essential, we must continue to emphasize the importance of the full humane discipline of English including the aesthetic, affective, and cultural aspects of written and oral expression as well as literature and the theatre.

ON ESTABLISHING TEACHER PAY ACCORDING TO SUBJECT AREAS

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, that the National Council or Teachers or English discourage any proposal designed to give extra compensation to teachers in selected subject matter fields as a way of correcting shortages;

that the Executive Committee convey to appropriate government officials, leaders of professional associations and unions, and the education press NCTE's opposition to extra financial compensation to selected subject area teachers on the basis of shortages; and

that NCTE affirm the necessity of raising all teachers' salaries.

DISSEMINATING INFORMATION AND AFFECTING POLICY

by
Karolyn Holm Burkett

It seems obvious to me that teachers are going to need to leave their classrooms in order to save them. We no longer have the luxury of shutting the door and ignoring what is going on around us. Most of the recent reports from commissions and panels about the state of teaching in our school today were done without teachers. It is no longer going to be possible for us to complain without suffering about such issues as class size, preparation time, and censorship. We have not taken strong effective stands or made a concerted effort to change practices that we know are hurting our students. No one else is going to do it for us, certainly not an administration or a school board who are only too happy to live with the status quo as long as no one rocks the boat.

After our own consciousnesses have been raised, we need to raise the consciousness of administrators, parents, and the community about the issues that affect our teaching of young people. Disseminating information like "**The Essentials of English**" and the yearly resolutions from NCTE to the public is only a first step. This year NCTE has even provided sample letters for you to use in getting this information out to the general public. You are the most likely person to get some coverage in the local paper or at the school board by presenting this information. I don't know about yours, but press releases from NCTE's national headquarters are not usually printed in my local paper.

If you are concerned about your class size and your inability to teach writing, order Excellence Packets from NCTE for your school board and your administration. Give them copies of the SLATE Starter Sheets on class size. Give them copies of the statements on workload and the teaching of composition printed and distributed by NCTE. Remember that you are an expert on communication. Practice what you teach!

Don't forget to establish a support group of other teachers who have the same goals you have. This may not be easy, but it will be your most rewarding activity. The sharing of ideas and the comradship that you establish will begin to break the isolation that has persisted for so long in our profession. United we stand!

ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

This resolution voices the concern of teachers of English about the unintended ill effects of recent legislation meant to improve the U.S. system of education. Teachers of English and the language arts share the national desire for the best possible system of education. But many actions taken by legislators, ostensibly to improve education, actually work against this goal. Meanwhile, actions which need to be taken to improve teaching and learning are not taken.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English affirm that as professional practitioners English language arts teachers are best qualified to decide what constitutes practice and curriculum content;

that NCTE urge legislative bodies and the agencies that regulate education to directly involve professional language arts organizations in the development of all legislation, regulations and guidelines governing English language arts practice and curriculum; and

that NCTE oppose the imposition by mandate of curriculum and practice that have not been developed with the involvement of professional language arts organizations and English language arts teachers.

NCTE Actions: Resolution and letter to pertinent bodies, such as U.S. Department of Education, state boards of education, and state legislature education committees.

Suggested Member Actions: Contact state legislators (especially those on legislative subcommittees) about the need for consultation with NCTE affiliate leaders in development of legislation related to the teaching of English language arts. (NOTE: Sample letter attached).

SAMPLE LETTER—Involvement in Curriculum Development Decisions

Dear (name of appropriate person):

Citizens, parents and teachers, like policymakers, are deeply concerned about the issues facing our schools today. While opinions vary on the best way to solve educational problems, it is clear that all interested parties should cooperate in exploring those problems and working towards solutions. The National Council of Teachers of English and the (name your affiliate), as professional associations of classroom teachers and teacher educators, are particularly concerned about questions of involving professionals in educational decisions that affect curriculum. At a recent national convention, NCTE members endorsed the following position statement:

> RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English affirm that as professional practitioners English language arts teachers are best qualified to decide what constitutes practice and curriculum content;
>
> that NCTE urge legislative bodies and the agencies that regulate education to directly involve professional language arts organizations in the development of all legislation, regulations and guidelines governing English language arts practice and curriculum; and
>
> that NCTE oppose the imposition by mandate of curriculum and practice that have not been developed with the involvement of professional language arts organizations and English language arts teachers.

This resolution voices the concern among teachers of English about the unintended ill effects of recent legislation meant to improve the U.S. system of education. Teachers of English and the language arts share the national desire for the best possible system of education. But many actions taken by legislators, ostensibly to improve education, actually work against this goal. Meanwhile, actions which need to be taken to improve teaching and learning are not taken.

NCTE and (name your affiliate) appreciate your concern in this area. We urge you to consider the problem carefully and to call upon our association leaders and members for informed opinion and substantive assistance. We'll gladly help you any way we can.

Sincerely yours,

(name of affiliate president or other affiliate leader)

SAMPLE LETTER—Corporal Punishment

Dear (name of appropriate person):

Citizens, parents and teachers, like policymakers, are deeply concerned about the issues facing our schools today. While opinions vary on the best way to solve educational problems, it is clear that all interested parties should cooperate in exploring those problems and working towards solutions. The National Council of Teachers of English and the (name your affiliate), as professional associations of classroom teachers and teacher educators, are particularly concerned about questions of corporal punishment. At a recent national convention, NCTE members endorsed the following position statement:

> RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English condemn cruel, degrading and humiliating treatment of students and call for an end of physical abuse and corporal punishment of all students in schools and other institutions where they are taught or cared for.

The proposers of this resolution applauded the large number of organizations which are insisting that all children have the right to a humane education, free from fear and physical punishment. Such punishment produces no lasting benefits and can cause serious physical and psychological damage. The American Academy of Pediatrics, Defense for Children International, the National Association of Social Workers, the National Education Association, and the American Public Health Association were cited as groups which have taken stands against corporal punishment.

NCTE and (name your affiliate) appreciate your concern in this area. We urge you to consider the problem carefully and to call upon our association leaders and members for informed opinion and substantive assistance. We'll gladly help you any way we can.

Sincerely yours,

(Name of affiliate president or other affiliate leader)

ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The proposers of this resolution applauded the large number of organizations which are insisting that all children have the right to a humane education, free from fear and physical punishment. Such punishment produes no lasting benefits and can cause serious physical and psychological damage. The text of the resolution follows. The American Academy of Pediatrics, Defense for Children International, the National Association of Social Workers, the National Education Association, and the American Public Health Association were cited as groups which have taken stands against corporal punishment.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English condemn cruel, degrading and humiliating treatment of students and call for an end of physical abuse and corporal punishment of all students in schools and other institutions where they are taught or cared for; and

that NCTE urge school districts and governing boards to provide inservice training in alternative and educationally sound classroom management and humane and just student discipline, and urge colleges of education to require pre-service education that includes the same.

NCTE Actions: Resolution and letter to pertinent bodies, such as U.S. Department of Education, state boards of education, and state legislature education committees; arrangement for possible publication of articles, in targeted journals, on concerns expressed in resolution.

Suggested Member Actions: If corporal punishment is legal in your state or district, contact state legislators (especially those in legislative subcommittees) and state and local administrators' organizations, informing them of the position and urging them to take appropriate action. (NOTE: Sample letter attached.)

ON GRAMMAR EXERCISES TO TEACH SPEAKING AND WRITING

This resolution was prompted by the continuing use of repetitive grammar drills and exercises in the teaching of English in many schools. Repeated studies by various researchers over more than fifty years have clearly shown that teaching grammar does not of itself lead to improvement in students' speaking and writing. Many studies have shown that such drills and exercises actually hinder development of students' oral and written language. The text of the resolution follows.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English affirm the position that the use of isolated grammar and usage exercises not supported by theory and research is a deterrent to the improvement of students' speaking and writing and that, in order to improve both of these, class time at all levels must be devoted to opportunities for meaningful listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and

that NCTE urge the discontinuance of testing practices that encourage the teaching of grammar rather than English language arts instruction.

NCTE Actions: resolution and letter to testing companies and agencies and to pertinent bodies, including state boards of education, state legislature education committees.

Suggested Member Actions: sponsor thematic issues of affiliate journals that include attention to research-based approaches to speaking and writing instruction; conduct affiliate conference sessions on the topic.

ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN TEACHING MATERIALS

This resolution voices the concern among members of NCTE that traditional presentations of the background of American history often distort or ignore achievements of peoples whose descendants are now ethnic minorities in the United States. Such practices deny minority students access to the achievements of their forebears and also deny majority students the benefit of a broader perspective on human history. The text of the resolution follows.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English urge publishers of trade books, textbooks and other educational media, including, but not limited to, those intended for the English language arts at all levels, to portray in their publications a broader perception of human history and, in their depiction of the United States, to integrate an adequate and accurate account of the presence and participation of racial and ethnic minority groups and their contributions to American history and literature;

that NCTE urge other professional groups to join us in this endeavor; and

that NCTE urge boards of education, local and state, and English language arts teachers at all levels to make such broad and fair representation of all people in teaching materials one criterion for their use in schools.

NCTE Actions: Resolution, letter, and copy of NCTE brochure "Non-White Minorities in English and Language Arts Materials" to appropriate publishers, professional organizations, state boards of education, and state legislature education committees; arrangement for possible publication of articles, in targeted journals, on concerns expressed in resolution.

Suggested Member Actions: Contact state and local boards of education and teacher organizations about concerns expressed in resolution, with particular attention to textbook selection processes and principles stated in NCTE's brochure "Non-White Minorities in English Language Arts Materials" (NOTE: copy of brochure enclosed; sample letter attached).

ON IMPROVING CONDITIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHING

This resolution expresses the concern of teachers of English about restrictions being placed on their teaching approaches as a result of recent reports on school reform. Mandates handed down by state and local school boards and school administrators sometimes restrict teachers from using methods that would be appropriate for students with particular modes of learning. Some students are thus denied opportunities to experience the speaking, writing, listening, reading, and thinking activities they need to develop their language abilities. Many such mandates also fail to address problems of class size and student-teacher ratios. They ignore available knowledge about the conditions necessary for effective teaching and learning of the language arts. The text of the resolution follows.

RESOLVED, that in order to address the national concern for making students better readers, writers, listeners and speakers and for effective acquisition, development and use of language at all levels, the National Council of Teachers of English reaffirm its positions on the need to reduce class size and student-teacher ratios at all levels of instruction;

that NCTE reaffirm its position on what constitutes necessary conditions for teaching the English language arts;

that NCTE urge those who generata and control budgets, including federal and state departments of education and governing boards of higher education, legislatures, school boards, superintendents and principals, to make these positions their policies and provide adequate funding to implement them;

that NCTE urge all accrediting agencies to adopt these guidelines as criteria for accreditation; and

that NCTE inform the widest possible audience of these positions, including parents, professional education organizations, and accrediting agencies.

NCTE Actions: Resolution and letter to pertinent bodies, such as accrediting agencies, professional organizations, U.S. Department of Education, state boards of education, and state legislature education committees; arrangement for possible publication of articles, in targeted journals, on concerns expressed in resolution; development of possible research on class size through proposal to Research Foundation.

Suggested Member Actions: Contact state legislatures (especially those in legislative subcommittees) informing them of NCTE positions on class size and urging appropriate legislation (NOTE: Class size positions enclosed; sample letter attached); conduct affiliate conference sessions on new NCTE/ERIC publication *Class Size and English in the Secondary School.*

SAMPLE LETTER—Improving Conditions—Class Size and Related Issues

Dear (name of appropriate person):

Citizens, parents and teachers, like policymakers, are deeply concerned about the issues facing our schools today. While opinions vary on the best way to solve educational problems, it is clear that all interested parties should cooperate in exploring those problems and working towards solutions. The National Council of Teachers of English and the (name your affiliate), as professional associations of classroom teachers and teacher educators, are particularly concerned about questions of teaching conditions, including class size. At a recent national convention, NCTE members endorsed the following position statement:

> RESOLVED, that in order to address the national concern for making students better readers, writers, listeners and speakers and for effective acquisition, development and use of language at all levels, the National Council of Teachers of English reaffirms its positions on the need to reduce class size and student-teacher ratios at all levels of instruction;
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>
> that NCTE urge those who generate and control budgets, including federal and state departments of education and governing boards of higher education, legislatures, school boards, superintendents and principals, to make these positions their policies and provide adequate funding to implement them;

This resolution expresses the concern of teachers of English about restrictions being placed on their teaching approaches as a result of recent reports on school reform. Mandates handed down by state and local school boards and school administrators sometimes restrict teachers from using methods that would be appropriate for students with particular modes of learning. Some students are thus denied opportunities to experience the speaking, writing, listening, reading, and thinking activities they need to develop their language abilities. Many such mandates also fail to address problems of class size and student-teacher ratios. They ignore available knowledge about the conditions necessary for effective teaching and learning of the language arts.

NCTE and (name your affiliate) appreciate your concern in this area. We urge you to consider the problem carefully and to call upon our association leaders and members for informed opinion and substantive assistance. We'll gladly help you any way we can.

Sincerely yours,

(name of affiliate president or other affiliate leader)

April 1985

STARTER SHEET

SLATE Support for the Learning and Teaching of English

WHEN ENGLISH TEACHERS FACE LARGE CLASSES

The issue of English teacher load is a recurring one, and until decision-makers in education make the necessary changes, the issue will continue to arise.

In the 1959 study *The American High School Today*, James B. Conant called for students to write an average of one theme a week, but he also recommended that teachers of English must have sufficient time for handling such papers. He urged that "no English teacher should be responsible for more than one hundred students."

In 1961, NCTE issued a report, *The National Interest and the Teaching of English*, that emphasized the tendency of "high schools that produce superior English students" to have lower than average English teacher loads and to require considerable amounts of writing from students. The report also stressed the problems experienced by English teachers and pointed directly to the teachers' inability in most school districts to assign compositions because of their overloaded classes.

In its own file of publications, SLATE has two previous statements that deal with teacher load. The first, written by Dennis J. Hannan and printed in August 1978, provides evidence that teachers of English at the secondary level still are "far from achieving the goal of four classes of 25 students, for a maximum load of 100 to 1"—a goal which has been advocated by members of the National Council of Teachers of English since early in the twentieth century. The second, written by Henrietta Wexler of the *American Education* staff, appeared in June 1980 under the title "What Happens in Smaller Classes?" The Wexler report details the results of studies by the National Institute of Education in 1978-79 in several elementary classrooms in California and Virginia. According to Wexler, the NIE studies suggest *"that smaller class size does significantly increase learning—particularly when the teacher takes full advantage of the opportunity to do more with fewer pupils."*

According to Martin N. Olson in the NEA booklet *Class Size*, the following conclusions can be established for classes with fewer students in them:

- Teachers employ a wider variety of instructional strategies, methods, and learning activities and are more effective with them. . . .
- Students benefit from more individualized instruction. . . .
- Students engage in more creative and divergent thinking processes. . . .
- Students learn how to function more effectively as members and leaders of groups of varying sizes and purposes. . . .
- Students develop better human relations with and have greater interpersonal regard for other students and their teachers. . . .
- Students learn the basic skills better and master more subject matter content. . . .

More recently, Franklin D. Schlatter, Chair of the SLATE Steering Committee, has discussed the issue in terms of the implications of *large* classes. In an article published in the *Illinois English Bulletin* (Spring 1984), Schlatter states that the differences between classes of 30 or more students and classes ranging from 15 to 20 students are clear to English teachers. He therefore has suggested that teachers of English at the secondary level emphasize to administrators, legislators, and the public-at-large such implications of large English classes as these:

- A teacher of English who faces 30 students in a class period of 50 minutes can, at best, have no more than one-and-a-half minutes per pupil for one-on-one instruction during any period. And because of routine attendance-taking and interruptions, the time for each student will probably be less than that.
- The more students there are in a class, the fewer compositions a teacher will assign and mark and grade.
- The greater the number of students in a class the fewer the talks prepared by students for presentation during class.
- The greater the number of students, the less time a teacher will have—and take—for preparing lessons.
- The less time a teacher has for preparation, the lower the quality of the assignments.

Share These Materials

SLATE *Starter Sheets* are offered as resources for dealing with current issues affecting the teaching of English language arts. SLATE contributors, NCTE members, affiliate leaders and others who receive such materials are invited to reproduce these materials for wider distribution (to administrators, school boards, colleagues in other disciplines, journalists, etc.) to help promote better understanding of the goals of English teaching.

NCTE

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

- In an overloaded instructional situation, the language arts teacher who attempts to emphasize writing and provide one-on-one assistance during the writing process will be far more tired at the end of the day than the teacher who avoids such a process. [In turn, the fatigue resulting from overwork can have an adverse effect upon the physical and mental well-being of teachers and whatever subsequent efforts they might make for improving instruction, grading papers, developing their personal backgrounds, etc.]
- The larger the number of students in a class the greater the pressure on the teacher to maintain student discipline. (Students in a small class can be disruptive, but the noise level will be lower.)
- The higher the pressure on the teacher to maintain discipline, the more likely it is that the students will sit in straight rows and the teacher will resort to lecture and dictation, supervised reading, commercially prepared materials, work sheets, objective tests—in general, methods and materials devoted to lower-level thinking skills.
- The teacher of large classes who assigns one or more written compositions a week will spend less time on each student paper than the teacher of small classes, and the comments provided on each paper will tend to be more superficial than otherwise.
- The teacher of large classes will spend more time with editing skills than formulation processes when marking student papers.
- The teacher of large classes who assigns weekly written compositions will work nights and weekends—times that other people have free to pursue leisure activities.
- Teachers of overloaded writing classes who assign regular compositions and then assume responsibility for reading and scoring all student papers will reduce their own reading of novels, plays, magazines, etc., and thus reduce their effectiveness in advocating reading to their students and in keeping current with literary, social and political matters.

It should be noted, of course, that the reduction of language arts class sizes will not only result in educational improvements but will also necessitate increased spending, for where English classes are reduced from 30 or more students per teacher to 20-25 (or fewer), additional English staff will be required. Furthermore, because the change will call for more sections of English, modifications in the school plant may be required, either through the addition of classrooms or through the renovation of present facilities to accommodate more—but smaller—classes. So, if decision-makers are not already aware of the financial implications of smaller English classes, they need to recognize that some increased costs will attend an improved language arts program that is accompanied by reduced class sizes.

At the same time, though, decision-makers must also recognize that language arts teachers who teach composition *must* be provided with suitable working conditions. Under present circumstances, a gross inequity is imposed on English teachers when administrators, school boards, and patrons expect the teachers to instruct their five classes of 30-plus students in the nuances of writing and to assign and critique numerous compositions. Just as other professional educators should not be required to give their weeknights and weekends to the paperwork of the school system, teachers of English should not be expected to spend their "free time" grading compositions. Yet as Ernest Boyer quite rightly points out in the Carnegie Foundation's report *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America:*

> Today most teachers meet five classes daily, with 25 to 30 students each. If the teacher gives one writing assignment every week to each student, he or she spends at a minimum, more than 20 hours correcting papers.

Is it any wonder, then, that language arts teachers feel like slaves to the system when that system and its supporters make unjust demands upon them? Is it any wonder, also, that language arts programs suffer because of the unrealistic conditions in which the teachers and students must work?

Reasonable workloads for teachers of English, particularly as they are reflected in reduced class sizes, would go far toward improving the teaching and learning of language skills in America's schools. And considering the emphasis that so many of the recent educational studies have given to the centrality of language in school programs, a priority for all educational institutions should be to provide optimum conditions for the teaching of the language arts.

The SLATE Steering Committee
  Franklin D. Schlatter, Chair
  Mary Sasse
  Bettie Horne
  Rhoda Maxwell
  Barbara Walvoord

Resources

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Class Size. National Education Association, 1977.

Glass, Gene V., et al. "Class Size and Learning--New Interpretation of the Research Literature." *Today's Education,* April/May 1979.

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FORUM

The Workload of the Elementary Teacher

NCTE Committee

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The following statement on the workload of the elementary teacher which is necessary for effective teaching was prepared by a Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English and officially adopted in February 1977 by the Board of Directors of the Council.

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Recommendations

To make it possible for elementary school teachers to be more effective language arts teachers, communities must fully comprehend the workload and responsibilities of teachers and provide the necessary support to facilitate effective teaching.

Through enlightened interaction among teachers, administrators and community members, local standards can be developed to provide the optimum conditions for a rich, stimulating language environment in which children can expand their language facility. Recognizing that elementary schools are diverse and complex in organizational patterns, the following minimal standards are recommended for limits of teacher workload.

1. The elementary classroom teacher should not be responsible for more than twenty-five pupils per class.
2. One class period or a minimum of thirty minutes should be provided within each school day for each elementary school teacher's planning time.
3. A half day a month should be set aside for each elementary school teacher for long-range planning.
4. The use of additional human resources in the classroom should not justify increased pupil-teacher ratio.
5. Clerks should be available to teachers on an assigned basis to attend to non-instructional tasks.
6. A library and instructional materials center with proper staff and adequate, varied teaching materials should be provided in every elementary school.
7. Participation in long term continuous inservice programs should be considered a part of teachers' workloads and should involve released time from other duties.
8. Participation in professional meetings and activities at local, state and national levels should be encouraged and financially supported.

Underlying Assumptions

Effective language learning depends upon the efforts of the elementary school teacher. Despite diversity in our schools, there are significant similarities. These assumptions underlie the recommendations and statement of policy.

1. All elementary teachers are teachers of the language arts, the subject which is the foundation for all other subjects commonly taught in the elementary schools. In order to learn social studies, science, math, arts, and humanities, children must be listening, speaking, writing, and reading.
2. The development of language includes reading, writing, listening, and speaking, the study of literature, and the exploration of the nature of language.
3. Teachers in elementary schools must themselves be proficient language users.
4. Successful teaching of language arts depends on knowledge of the language and background experiences of each pupil in a class.
5. Teachers must continually acquire new knowledge and improve their teaching.
6. Although schools should focus on children's becoming proficient language users for present everyday communication, the teaching staff must discuss with parents and interact with secondary school faculty for the sake of facilitating students' transitions to secondary schools.
7. Properly prepared teachers who are given adequate time for the tasks directly related to teaching will make responsible judgments about the use of that time.

The Teaching Load and the Responsibilities of the Elementary School Teacher

The responsibilities of elementary school teachers are broad and diverse. Besides responding in a positive and sensitive manner to the needs of children, teachers must be able to teach skillfully the wide variety of subject areas of the elementary school curriculum. These major responsibilities involve helping children explore their own experiences and develop logical, thoughtful and effective communication skills in becoming knowledgeable individuals adept in their relations with others.

Language is a vehicle through which ideas are conceptualized and tested. It is also a tool used in learning and, therefore, directly related to all areas of the school curriculum. Consequently, teachers must attend to the listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking abilities of children and must help them explore and appreciate language and literature in all disciplines of learning. Elementary school teachers have large and inescapable responsibilities for planning appropriate language experiences.

Teaching responsibilities are numerous and frustrating. The tasks of most elementary school teachers are often complicated by unreasonable workloads. Major elements of a workload include class size, planning time, access to human and material resources, and opportunity for professional growth. Implications of workload are examined in the following paragraphs and are basic to the development of the recommendations and policy statement. These should be seriously considered by the teachers, administrators, and parents in every elementary school in the nation.

Class Size

The relationship between a child's control of language and success in most school activities is indisputable. So is the importance of early instruction in language use. Large classes, however, reduce the teacher's ability to pay enough attention to each child's pattern of language development. Indeed, teachers can effectively diagnose children's needs, provide a suitable variety of books materials, and assignments, and evaluate children's progress only if class size is limited to not more than twenty-five pupils. Furthermore, when teachers work with children in the early grades or outside the normal range of learning capacity or emotional stability the class size should be fewer than twenty-five.

The ratio of twenty-five children for each certificated teacher should be preserved as a maximum in all teaching situations regardless of organization or administrative designs. The introduction of differing patterns of instruction should incorporate these limitations for effective class size and pupil load and should not be used as a means to subvert them.

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED THAT

*The elementary school teacher should not be responsible for more than twenty-five pupils per class.

Planning Time

Daily preparation for teaching demands intellectual energy, imagination, thoroughness, and flexibility. Evaluation of children's progress is an intricate part of planning. Teachers need quiet time to read and respond to children's writing and to maintain continuously adequate records of a child's language development. It is the professional responsibility of all teachers to acquire knowledge of new subject matter and teaching methodology in order to keep their plans up-to-date and relevant to their pupils and to the community. Teachers can do some planning away from the school but much of it must be done at school, where materials and resources are available. When elementary school teachers have continuous responsibility for groups of children from the opening to the closing of the school day, their planning time is both insufficient and inefficient.

The variety of planning for which an elementary school teacher is responsible often has different purposes and requires special conditions. It must be executed in a variety of ways and reflect the unique conditions in each school community. Team planning requires more time than individual planning. Examination and evaluation of the school program, planning for change, and reporting to parents are joint responsibilities of both teachers and administrators and require cooperative planning. Sometimes individuals involved in joint ventures can meet on school days; more often development of curriculum, selection and analytical review of textbooks and other instructional material require large blocks of time and can be accomplished only on weekends, during school holidays or after regular school working hours.

Avoidable interruptions of classroom instruction or teacher planning time, such as unnecessary administrative announcements or unannounced visitors, result in serious cumulative losses in both teaching and planning time. Scheduled planning time and the opportunity for uninterrupted working with children should be preserved. Policies about announcements and visitors should be developed by and reevaluated regularly with the entire school staff.

As an absolute minimum, elementary school teachers should have, during the course of each school day, one class period or a minimum of thirty minutes of planning time free from teaching, supervisory or monitoring responsibilities. A variety of procedures can be used to release blocks of planning time for classroom teachers. Half a day a month when children are not present should be set aside for long-range planning and interacting with others responsible for curriculum development.

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED THAT

*One class period of a minimum of thirty minutes should be provided within each school day for each elementary school teacher's planning time.

*Half day a month should be set aside for each elementary school teacher for long-range planning.

Access to Resources

The role of the elementary teacher is no longer that of dispenser of knowledge but of "facilitator of learning." This view has led to supportive para-professional staff and a wider range of educational materials and equipment, both of which have increased the responsibilities of teachers' organizing and planning. It is frequently assumed, incorrectly, that additional staff and resources have decreased the workload of the elementary school teacher. Although pupil learning in most cases is enhanced by additional supportive staff and a variety of materials, the workload of the teacher is increased. The teacher is now expected to: 1) be aware of the multiplicity of new materials; 2) use them effectively; 3) match materials and needs of children; 4) plan for and use the service of supportive staff in the most productive manner.

In order to minimize teacher's workloads under such circumstances, teachers, para-professionals and other supportive staff should be required to attend workshops that prepare them for clerical and tutoring assistance. Such workshops will foster understandings of each member's own role in the classroom and how the use of a variety of personnel can be most useful in the language and learning development of children. It is a waste of valuable professional time and competence to provide "on the job" training for these personnel. Teacher morale and quality of instruction are adversely affected when disproportionate amounts of teacher time are spent on such duties as collecting money, keeping records, monitoring and supervising lunchrooms, playrooms, and hallways. Clerks should be available to teachers to avoid misuse of valuable planning and instructional time.

In addition, each elementary school should have a library or instructional media center with enough properly trained staff to select, catalog and maintain materials and to assist the teacher and pupils in using them most effectively. The teacher should have ready access to many kinds of resources, ranging from books to natural objects to specialized equipment in order to meet the varying interests and abilities of pupils.

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED THAT

- The use of additional human resources in the classroom should not be used to justify an increased pupil-teacher ratio.
- Clerks should be available to teachers on an assigned basis to attend to noninstructional tasks.
- A library and instructional materials center with proper staff and adequate, varied teaching materials should be provided in every elementary school.

Professional Growth

An examination of the workload of the elementary school teacher must recognize the need for continuous learning and growth as part of a teacher's professional responsibility.

Instructional decisions and teaching practices are dependent upon a teacher's understanding of language and language arts and a teacher's competencies in the use of language. Inservice teacher education programs must help teachers to understand the nature of language and to use language efficiently and effectively. An effective teacher of language arts must be widely read, be prepared to analyze and use both adult and children's literature, and be able to relate this analysis to instruction. An effective teacher of language must be aware of current events and the significant issues reported in newspapers and magazines. The teaching of reading and writing should reflect awareness of their complexities and their interrelationship with oral language.

The teacher should have an understanding of the historical development of language, the variety of spoken dialects, and the process of language acquisition and development. Furthermore, teachers need opportunities to examine their own attitudes about language differences because attitudes toward language differences will affect instructional decisions and practices.

Regardless of the adequacy of a preservice teacher education program, the elementary school teacher must otherwise continue to learn and grow. It is incumbent upon school districts to provide opportunities and encouragement for continuous professional growth because of: 1) new insights from research and the implications of new information for the development of curricula and teaching techniques; 2) the limitations of time and consequent information processed in a preservice teacher education program; and 3) the potential for better understanding the relationship between theory and practice resulting from "on the job" experiences.

To insure this growth, administrators should create and nurture an environment for growth by providing teachers with assistance from supervisors and colleagues as well as opportunities to plan carefully and to assess the effectiveness of instruction. Also necessary is a climate conducive to teacher contributions to carefully planned but flexible curricula and study guides. Moreover, well-directed, continuous inservice programs which provide individual teacher follow-up observations and consultations are essential for teacher growth. Also, teachers should be given encouragement and support to attend statewide and national professional conferences.

In actual practice, these recommendations for professional growth can be realized only through programs which provide released time and/or special compensation to those teachers involved. While improvement in physical environment, equipment, material, or organizational structure can make positive contributions to the school curriculum, these can never take the place of the teacher's increased understanding and competence gained from well-formulated, continuous programs for professional growth.

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED THAT

*Participation in long term continuous inservice programs should be considered a part of teacher's workloads and should involve released time from other duties.

*Participation in professional meetings and activities at local, state and national levels should be encouraged and financially supported.

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Workload and the Teaching of Secondary School English

Statement on Teacher Load: Secondary English

Reprinted from **English** *Journal, vol. 68, no. 7 (October 1979), p. 15.*

Increasingly, school administrators are finding it convenient to ease tight budgets by increasing teacher loads. One or two students added to every class in the school may reduce the need to hire replacement teachers and thus save salary costs. At the same time, many of the same administrators complain that students can't write and wonder why English teachers don't assign more compositions. With this national problem in mind, the Secondary Section Committee of NCTE has prepared the following position statement.

Parents, the community, and English language arts teachers demand effective education which enables the student to develop facility in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In order to develop these skills, students in language arts classes have a right to the teacher's time: time for diagnosis, time for questions, time for progress reports, time for individual help, and time for careful response to student writing. The language arts teacher, too, has a right to time as a professional: time for classroom instruction, time for classroom preparation, and time for those assigned school duties which are shared with faculty members from other disciplines.

Basic to English language arts instruction is the experience of writing itself and the immediate response to that writing from the teacher. To provide effective instruction in writing, the language arts teacher must have a class size and student load that allow time to meet school and classroom responsibilities and to provide attention to individual student needs. For a teacher load of 100 students, a minimum of 20 minutes per week per student for the evaluation of writing involves 33.3 hours—the equivalent of four working days—in addition to the time required for the preparation and teaching of the other language arts skills.

As a professional organization, the National Council of Teachers of English calls for a teacher workload that gives students the benefit of adequate teacher response to student writing. NCTE enlists the support of administrators, school board members, and members of the community at large in providing the conditions necessary for the English teacher to provide effective instruction.

Therefore, the National Council of Teachers of English calls for a teacher workload of not more than 100 students.

Background

Reprinted from SLATE, vol. 3, no. 4 (August 1978)

The Issue

What is the relationship between the number of students assigned to an English teacher and the effectiveness of that teacher's instruction? This issue has been faced at annual meetings of the National Council of Teachers of English since its organization in 1911, leading to a series of research studies and an official policy which recommends "that full-time English language arts teachers in secondary schools be assigned a teaching load of no more than 100 students daily." This is the same ratio recommended by James B. Conant after his 1960s study of the American high school, by the President's Commission on National Goals in Education, by the Commission on English of the College Entrance Examination Board, and by virtually every other state and national group which has studied the teaching of English.

During the 1960s, responding to a nationwide concern with improving instruction, many boards of education moved to bring teaching loads in English more in line with such recommendations. During the 1970s, however, these same school boards have been faced with escalating costs and severely restricted budgets. As to what degree workload has increased during this economically stressful decade, the statistics are at best disturbing and certainly confusing. Studies using "pupil-teacher ratio," for example, may include supportive staff such as librarians, psychologists, reading and speech specialists, and even administrators; the resulting ratios of "teacher" to student provide a poor estimate of the number of pupils confronting the typical teacher of English. The best data currently available are presented by Arthur N. Applebee in his NCTE survey of teaching conditions in the spring of 1977. Results indicated that our nation's schools are far from achieving the goal of four classes of 25 students, for a maximum load of 100 to 1. In Applebee's random sample, 91 percent of the teachers taught more than four classes a day. In "Honor Roll" schools—those reporting a maximum load of 100 to 1 in the 1960s—65 percent taught more than four classes per day. More to the point, 30 percent of high school English classes had more than 30 students, and 59 percent exceeded the 25-per-class criterion. At best, a typical secondary school English teacher can expect to teach five classes per day, with 26 to 30 students per class.

In their struggle to reduce their workload, English teachers (in common with their colleagues in other disciplines) have looked to their teacher unions and education associations for help. As one result, workloads have become a prime item in contract negotiations. In contract after contract, however, English teachers have found unique requirements for the teaching of English submerged in across-the-board workload limits. In districts which had earlier recognized the special needs of English instruction, these general workload limits have often meant a step backwards for teachers of English.

Students in many other school disciplines are protected by state-mandated workload limits, such as for shopwork with potentially dangerous machinery, or for science labs, where workloads may be limited not only for safety but also because of limited student stations and supplies of expensive equipment. Such mandates rarely apply to the teaching of English, however, and the statistics on workload make clear that the laboratory conditions necessary for the most effective instruction are rarely provided.

Research Evidence

But taxpayers who pay teachers' salaries have the right to remain unconcerned about such statistics unless it is clear that students are being hurt, and that current funding is being wasted by unreasonable and unproductive workloads in English.

Although there are many subskills to be taught, we can perhaps oversimply define English instruction as the teaching of three paired abilities—speaking/listening, writing/reading, and demonstrating/observing. Research summarized by Martin N. Olson (in the NEA booklet *Class Size*) relates workload to this broad spectrum of English instruction. Basing his comments on a wide range of research, Olson makes six generalizations about results *when teachers have fewer students to work with:*

> Teachers employ a wider variety of instructional strategies, methods, and learning activities and are more effective with them. . . .
>
> Students benefit from more individualized instruction. . . .
>
> Students engage in more creative and divergent thinking processes. . . .
>
> Students learn how to function more effectively as members and leaders of groups of varying sizes and purposes. . . .
>
> Students develop better human relations with and have greater interpersonal regard for other students and their teachers. . . .
>
> Students learn the basic skills better and master more subject matter content. . . .

In terms of "back to basics" the last generalization makes the most immediate sense, but we must always recognize that in our students' futures the problem-solving, decision-making, and social skills implicit in the other five generalizations are also of vital importance.

Although the research cited by Olson supports a general decrease in teacher workload, it is the conditions necessary and peculiar to the teaching of writing that justify special consideration for the workload of English teachers.

The teaching of writing is a difficult, time-consuming process. It has been established that the correction of just one set of themes may require as many as ten hours of painstaking work on the part of the instructor (Dusel, 1955), but this time is only a part of a much longer sequence that includes careful preparation of the assignment itself, careful relating of the assignment to the students' interests and needs, prewriting preparation, and class and individual follow-up of the writing that results.

To risk simplistic analysis, the effectiveness of a teacher in nonwriting aspects of English instruction is arithmetically related to the number of students involved. As class size increases, the teacher's effectiveness is only inhibited for each student by the proportionate lessening of that student's opportunity for question and reply, dialogue, and other direct participation. In the teaching of writing, however, the English teacher must ultimately work with one student, helping *that one* student to write, and cannot rely in the same way upon class-based activities. Therefore, if the effectiveness of the English teacher in nonwriting aspects of English can be said to be arithmetic in relation to the number of students, the effectiveness of the English teacher in teaching *writing* decreases *geometrically* as we give that teacher more and more students.

Set as a maximum, 100 to 1 is no magic formula. In some highly successful private schools, English teachers work with no more than forty students. Because few public secondary schools can afford the intensive individual instruction such very low workloads make possible, the 100 to 1 ratio is a calculated balancing of the various returns from instruction against the public's investment in teachers' salaries—which make up approximately 70 percent of the school budget.

Strategies for Action

1. Secondary school English teachers, with their colleagues in elementary language arts and in college composition, should work with students, parents, administrators, boards of education, taxpayer groups, and professional associations to establish a nationwide understanding of the need for reasonable workloads for teachers of English.
2. Teachers in all subject areas should work together to improve students' interdisciplinary writing. In Schools where the whole staff is concerned about writing instruction, English teachers should find their colleagues supportive of laboratory conditions for the teaching of writing.
3. A community committee should be formed for in-depth study of factors affecting writing in local schools. The committee should include students, teachers, parents, and community representatives, and should set short and long-term calendars for the implementation of each of its recommendations.
4. English teachers should be directly represented on collective bargaining units to insure that the unique conditions necessary for the teaching of English will be reflected in contract provisions.
5. English teachers, their local and state English councils, and community groups should urge state education departments to set laboratory workload requirements for the teaching of English, as is the case with workload mandates in other subject areas.
6. The advice of local, state, and national English councils should be sought on all issues affecting the workload of English teachers. As members of such groups, English teachers should support and encourage research and committee activity related to workloads.
7. Finally, but most importantly, as teachers of communication English teachers must be encouraged to *communicate*, discussing the needs of their students with those who can remedy the current wasteful workload imbalance. When these needs are understood, English teachers will have many allies. Even so staunch a critic of current practice as the Council for Basic Education agrees "that the English teacher who faces five classes of thirty students per day is carrying an intolerable load" (CBE *Bulletin*, May 1972).

Dennis J. Hannan
(For the NCTE/SLATE Steering Committee
on Social and Political Concerns)

Resources

Applebee, Arthur N. *A Survey of Teaching Conditions in English, 1977.* NCTE and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 1978.

Bozzomo, Lawrence E. "Does Class Size Matter?" *The National Elementary Principal Magazine*, January 1978.

Class Size. National Education Association, 1977.

Dusel, William J. "Determining an Efficient Teaching Load in English." *Illinois English Bulletin*, October 1955.

Which School Resources Help Learning? Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, 1975.

Teaching Composition: A Position Statement by the NCTE Commission on Composition

The NCTE Commission on Composition has prepared this position paper to state essential principles in the teaching of writing. We hope that this statement will guide teachers, parents, and administrators in understanding the power of writing and in teaching it effectively.

The Act of Writing

Writing is a powerful instrument of thought. In the act of composing, writers learn about themselves and their world and communicate their insights to others. Writing confers the power to grow personally and to effect change in the world.

The act of writing is accomplished through a process in which the writer imagines the audience, sets goals, develops ideas, produces notes, drafts, and a revised text, and edits to meet the audience's expectations. As the process unfolds, the writer may turn to any one of these activities at any time. We can teach students to write more effectively by encouraging them to make full use of the many activities that comprise the act of writing, not by focusing only on the final written product and its strengths and weaknesses.

The Purposes for Writing

In composing, the writer uses language to help an audience understand something the writer knows about the world. The specific purposes for writing vary widely, from discovering the writer's own feelings, to persuading others to a course of action, recreating experience imaginatively, reporting the results of observation, and more.

Writing assignments should reflect this range of purposes. Student writers should have the opportunity to define and pursue writing aims that are important to them. Student writers should also have the opportunity to use writing as an instrument of thought and learning across the curriculum and in the world beyond school.

The Scenes for Writing

In the classroom where writing is especially valued, students should be guided through the writing process; encouraged to write for themselves and for other students, as well as for the teacher; and urged to make use of writing as a mode of learning, as well as a means of reporting on what has been learned. The classroom where writing is especially valued should be a place where students will develop the full range of their composing powers. This classroom can also be the scene for learning in many academic areas, not only English.

Because frequent writing assignments and frequent individual attention from the teacher are essential to the writing classroom, writing classes should not be larger than twenty students.

Teachers in all academic areas who have not been trained to teach writing may need help in transforming their classrooms into scenes for writing. The writing teacher should provide leadership in explaining the importance of this transformation and in supplying resources to help bring it about.

The Teachers of Writing

Writing teachers should themselves be writers. Through experiencing the struggles and joys of writing, teachers learn that their students will need guidance and support throughout the writing process, not merely comments on the written product. Furthermore, writing teachers who write know that effective comments do not focus on pointing out errors, but go on to the more productive task of encouraging revision, which will help student writers to develop their ideas and to achieve greater clarity and honesty.

Writing teachers should be familiar with the current state of our knowledge about composition. They should know about the nature of the composing process; the relationship between reading and writing; the functions of writing in the world of work; the value of the classical rhetorical tradition; and more. Writing teachers should use this knowledge in their teaching, contribute to it in their scholarly activities, and participate in the professional organizations that are important sources of this knowledge.

The knowledgeable writing teacher can more persuasively lead colleagues in other academic areas to increased attention to writing in their classes. The knowledgeable teacher can also work more effectively with parents and administrators to promote good writing instruction.

The Means of Writing Instruction

Students learn to write by writing. Guidance in the writing process and discussion of the students' own work should be the central means of writing instruction. Students should be encouraged to comment on each other's writing, as well as receiving frequent, prompt, individualized attention from the teacher. Reading what others have written, speaking about one's responses to their writing, and listening to the responses of others are important activities in the writing classroom. Textbooks and other instructional resources should be of secondary importance.

The evaluation of students' progress in writing should begin with the students' own written work. Writing ability cannot be adequately assessed by tests and other formal evaluation alone. Students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their writing ability in work aimed at various purposes. Students should also be encouraged to develop the critical ability to evaluate their own work, so they can become effective, independent writers in the world beyond school.

Date ____________________

Name ____________________

School ____________________

To support the learning and teaching of English Language Arts, I plan to:

1. ____________________

2. ____________________

3. ____________________

Return to: Karolyn Burkett
Judith Keck

SLATE Support for the Learning and Teaching of English

Date ____________________

Name ____________________

School ____________________

To support the learning and teaching of English Language Arts, I plan to:

1. ____________________

2. ____________________

3. ____________________

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Judith Keck

SLATE Support for the Learning and Teaching of English